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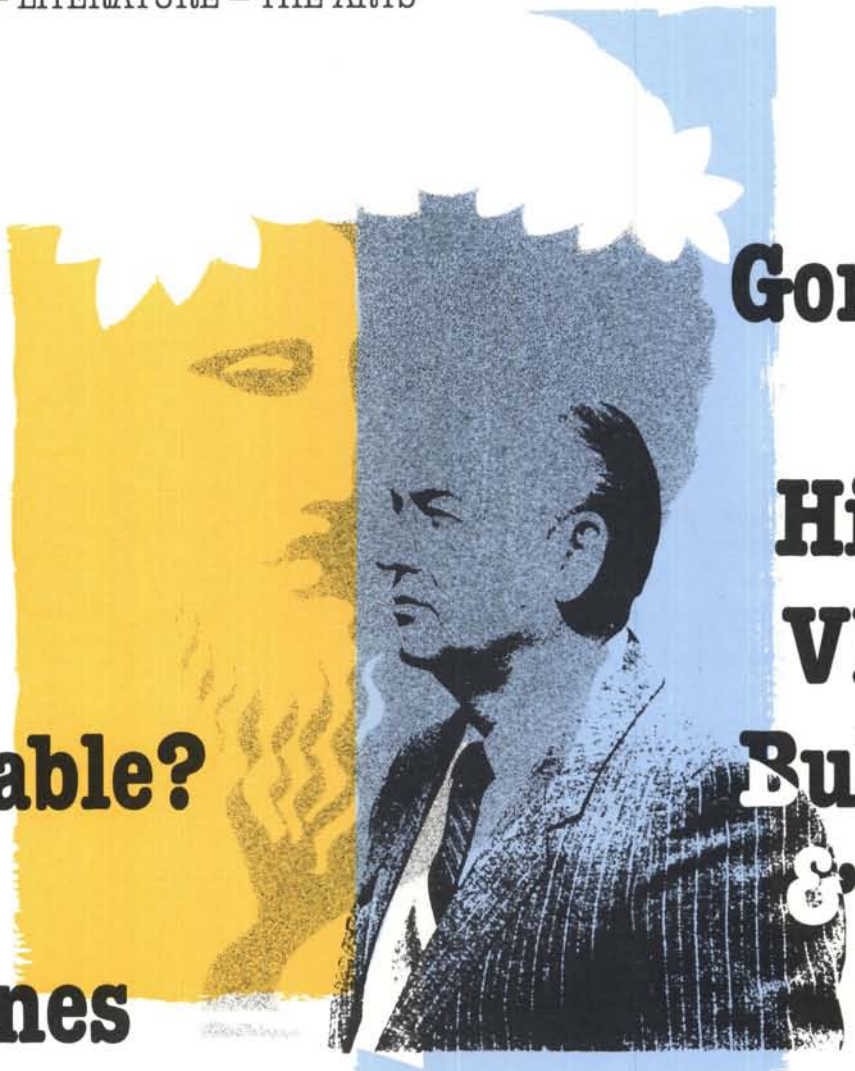

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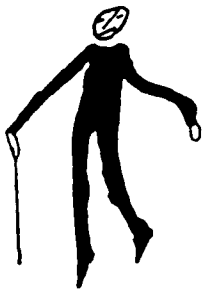

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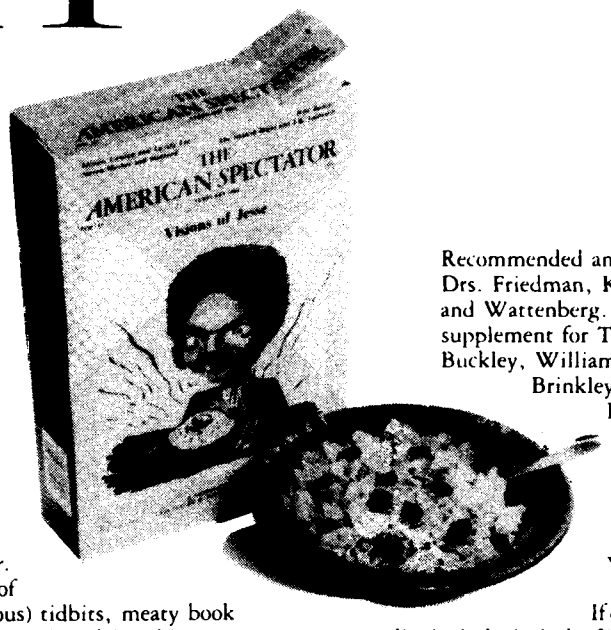

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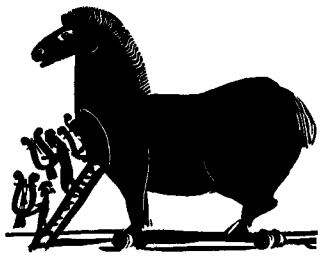
Peter Jones

Winged Words

On Translating Homer



"ET TU, BRUTE? Then fall, Caesar." Shakespeare turns into Latin what, according to Suetonius, Caesar actually said in Greek, i.e. *kai* (also, too, and) *su* (you), *teknon* (child, son). The change of *teknon* to *Brute* is interesting. More interesting still is the possibility that the Greek is not a cry of despair and outrage but of abuse, i.e. as Brutus stabs him Caesar cries "And the same to you" (with, as it were, pommels on). I do not myself see how such an interpretation could be made wholly congruent with the argument of Shakespeare's play, even though Brutus commits suicide by stabbing himself to death with Caesar's name on his lips ("Caesar, now be still;/I kill'd not thee with half so good a will"). But since modern directors seem more interested in effects than argument, I offer it for what little it is worth.

If we care to see central issues of translation in these six small Greek and Latin words—issues of literalness, meaning, interpretation—we would in this instance, I think, be wrong. Shakespeare is not so much translating Suetonius as using for his own purposes what Suetonius offers. The question to ask is not "How far does *et tu, Brute* translate *kai su, teknon*?" but "What were Shakespeare's dramatic intentions in making the use of *kai su, teknon* that he did?". But now that the deconstructionists have moved in, it looks as if we are not going to be allowed to ask the first question ever again. Writing in the *TLS* Roy Harris argues that we need new translations not because old ones become out-of-date (they could be revised periodically) but because the concept of translation has changed.[1] In this post-structuralist era, he argues, translation has "no claim to validity other than as an historical statement . . . intrinsically provisional, corrigible and replaceable". What the translator does nowadays is not imitate, but re-analyse:

> "The criteria of excellence are not simulational criteria. A bad translation is not bad because the analysis it offers requires us to see the original in an unusual, fragmented or controversial way. Errors of representation are not the ground on which to condemn a twentieth-century translator. Rather, the translator's worst possible fault, like the painter's and the photographer's, is now seen as that representational automatism which fails to present any structurally coherent analysis at all."

No one is about to deny, of course, that a translation is an historical statement, and can be analysed in those terms. But Harris produces no evidence for his contention that modern translators do not try to imitate but to analyse, let alone that modern translators work under the shadow of post-structuralism. Let him ring round a few Penguin translators and see what they say. I have, and the answers were on the brusque side.

BESIDES, Harris is wrong. Errors of representation are precisely grounds on which to condemn a translation, 20th-century or otherwise (which does not mean that the translation cannot have its own merits and interest). If I knew what a "structurally coherent analysis" was, I should argue that it depends critically on faithfulness to the text. At least I can think of no useful purpose that could be served by such an analysis if it did not matter whether *arma virumque cano* was translated "Arms and the man I sing" or "'Course it's a bleeding penalty, ref.". Moreover, I can see no logic, only assertion, in the "argument" that it was justified in the past to identify "errors" in translation, but now that we are post-structuralists, it isn't. Post-structuralist theory may well affect our attitude towards such errors, but I can see no reason why it should, as a matter of principle, refuse to acknowledge them. Away with this "social worker" theory of literature.

There is nothing new to be said about translation. It has all been said, and at tremendous length, and in circles.[2] But an important event in the history of translation has just passed, and it is worth considering it in detail. I refer to the publication of Penguin's second *Iliad* translation, by Martin

[1] Roy Harris, "The Ephemerality of Translation", *The Times Literary Supplement*, 28 August 1987.

[2] E.g. George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975), a massive and almost impenetrable theoretical discussion, best approached through Hugh Lloyd-Jones's review in ENCOUNTER ("The Anatomy of Translation", June 1975), and, most recently, a series of very variable essays by translators of Penguin Classics on the problems they have faced: *The Translator's Art*. Edited by W. RADICE. Penguin, £6.95.

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Hammond.[3] The first was E. V. Rieu's (1951) and indeed his *Odyssey* (1946)[4] started the famous Penguin Classic series. Their combined sales run into the millions, and have brought more people into contact with Homeric epic than any other books have ever done. So there are celebrations to enjoy, as well as questions to ask.

My modest purpose, then, is to use some contemporary translations of Homer, especially the new Hammond, to draw attention to the problem of translating Homeric epic and to the issue of a translator's priorities in 1987. Help me, Muse! for you alone know where to begin the argument.

About 2,000 years ago, the elder Cato gave the following advice to the fledgling orator: *rem tene, verba sequentur*—"Keep a grip on the point/issue/argument, and the words will follow". The distinction between *res* and *verba* is a seductively simple one, and we know that, to a critical degree in poetry, the two are in fact inseparable. But translation, by *definition*, separates them. Whatever else we can have, we cannot have the *verba*. At least, then, we must ensure that we have the *res*. I define the *res* of the original as (*1*) the subject-matter of every word, (*2*) the argument or point at issue in every utterance.

That is an arbitrary judgment. I could have defined *res* in a thousand ways. The great advantage that it offers is that, as a target, it looks as if it can be hit. It is the minimum at which every translator must, perforce, aim if he is to argue that he is translating and not doing anything else.

Now, clearly, we need more than this. If we did not, we would end up with Dr Giles. Here is a passage from his wonderful "Key to the Classics" version of Sallust's *Catiline*, "Construed, with the Text, into ENGLISH, Literally, and Word for Word":

> "*Dum* whilst *hæc* these things *aguntur* are being done *in senatu* in the senate, *et* and *dum* whilst *præmia* rewards *decernuntur* are decreed *legatis* to the ambassadors *Allobrogum* of the Allobroges *et* and *Tito Volturcio* to Titus Volturcius, *indicio eorum* their information *comprobato* having been approved of, *liberti* the freedmen *et* and *pauci* a few *ex clientibus* of the clients *Lentuli* of Lentulus *diversis itineribus* by different routes *sollicitabant* were stirring up *opifices* the handicraftsmen *atque* and *servitia* the slaves *in vicis* in the streets *ad eum eripiundum* to save him, *partim* partly *exquirebant* were seeking out *duces* the leaders *multitudinum* of mobs, *qui* who *solebant* were accustomed *pretio* for hire *vexare* to harass *rempublicam* the state."

Of this one could say a number of things, particularly that it is neither literal, nor word-for-word, but the important point is that it is quite unreadable, even with the Latin removed. There seem to me two instructive conclusions to draw.

FIRST, LET US ABANDON once and for all the chimaera of "the literal translation". Here is an issue which brings to light an exquisite paradox: the paradox of the scholar demanding that, when students translate English into Greek, they "get away" from or "think through" the English to the core of the Greek idiom, but when they translate from Greek into English, the English should be as close to the Greek as possible. The reason is, I suppose, educational. The long-term aim of both exercises is to encourage reflection about the Greek. But since I am assuming that the purpose of translation is to make the author accessible to a wide audience, "reflection about the Greek" is hardly at a premium. In other words, literal translation is not needed.

It also happens to be impossible, in any strict or even loose sense. *Arma virumque cano*, three words in Latin, requires six at the very least to render it into English ("Arms and the man I sing"). Since on this simplest of utterances one has already overshot by 100%, one may as well overshoot by 200% and produce something a little more readable. Dr Giles merely reinforces the argument.

The second conclusion is even more important. It concerns the quality of the English into which the text is being translated. Homer is a cracking good read. Since for most readers the translation *is* the original, we cannot put anything in the way which will hinder that enjoyment. That does not mean we cannot be opaque or ambiguous where Homer is, if we so wish (this is blessedly rare). But the most important question a translator can ask is "Can we say this in English?". If the answer is "No", or "No, but it's jolly close to the Greek", scrub it. There is no room for fustian, pedantry, or translationese. A good translator will, of course, bend every verbal muscle in his body to produce English idiom which faithfully reflects the original, but if it cannot be done, away with the original.[5]

There is an immediate objection to this. Should not poetry be translated by poetry? And do not poets have licences to bend the English language to their will? No and yes, in that order. Here is a second chimaera which badly needs slaying. My reason for attacking it is a wholly pragmatic one: that is, whenever poetic translations of Homer have been made, the resulting text is excruciatingly awful either as a reproducer of *res* or as a poem, or both. I have inveighed elsewhere against the "poet" Robert Fitzgerald's universally applauded modern translations of Greek and Latin epic.[6] But take Pope. In this passage Hera, who plans to take Zeus out of the action for a while, tricks him into making love to her. Zeus responds (and readers can check for themselves whether the Roman type, which indicates Pope's reworkings and additions, is fair):

> Gazing *he spoke*, and kindling at the view,
> *His* eager *Arms around the* Goddess *threw*.
> Glad *Earth* perceives, and from her Bosom *pours*
> *Unbidden Herbs*, and voluntary Flowers;
> *Thick* new-born Violets a *soft* Carpet spread,

---

[3] *Homer: The Iliad*. Translated by MARTIN HAMMOND. Penguin, £2.95.

[4] Penguin is commissioning a new translation by the "poet" Robert Fagles. My heart sinks at the prospect.

[5] In his famous debate with Francis Newman, Matthew Arnold argued that, since Homeric repetition was foreign to English, a translator should simply omit it. But if Hector always has a flashing helmet in Homer, I can see nothing innately "foreign" about him always having one in English. The issue of idiom is on a quite different scale.

[6] "Reassessment", *Literary Review*, November 1987.

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> And clustering Lotos *swelled the rising Bed,*
> *And* sudden *Hyacinths the* Turf bestrow,
> And flamy Crocus made the Mountain glow.
> *There golden Clouds conceal* the heavenly Pair,
> Steeped in soft Joys, and circumfused with Air;
> Celestial *Dews, descending o'er the Ground,*
> Perfume the Mount, and breathe Ambrosia round.
> *At length with Love and Sleep's* soft power *opprest,*
> *The panting Thunderer nods, and sinks to* Rest. . . .

Sigh. Those who have not at once thrown down the magazine and gone off to read the rest of Pope's *Iliad*[7]—there cannot be many—will be amused to see what the Greek says. Here is Martin Hammond:

> "So he spoke, and the son of Kronos took his wife in his arms. And underneath them the holy earth put forth fresh-springing grass, and dewy clover and saffron, and hyacinth thick and soft, which held them high away from the ground. In his bed they lay down together, and covered themselves in cloud, beautiful and golden: and from it the dew-drops fell glittering round them.
>
> So the father slept unmoving on the height of the Gargaron, overcome by sleep and love, holding his wife in his arms."

Richard Bentley was right when he said to Pope: "A very pretty poem, Mr Pope, but you must not call it Homer." That does not alter the fact that Pope's version is a magnificent reconceptualisation of Homer, embodied with utter confidence into a form perfectly suited to the poetic manner and human *mores* of Pope's Miltonic, classicised, but deeply Christian world. But we earth-bound mortals who seek Homeric *res* will not find them here.

THE FACT THAT HOMER has not been translated successfully into poetry does not prove that the exercise is impossible or that it should not be tried. And it does have, in my view, one very considerable advantage. "Poetry", or what passes for it (poetic vocabulary set in lines with unjustified right-hand margins and a passing shot at rhythm) is able to create (however falsely) the illusion of a "world" in which the literal translation of Homer, with all its repetitions and oddities, somehow seems to make sense.

Take the famous Homeric "winged words". No such idiom exists in contemporary English (words "flying" is a metaphor restricted to "heated exchanges" in our language). But smear a little archaic gloss-paint on the whole translation—a "thus" here, a "spake" there, a sprinkling of "forsooths"—and "winged words" suddenly seem perfectly at home. This is, in my view, simply a fraud. Archaic gloss cannot cover the differences. It requires wholesale uplifting and moving of the Homeric world into another for that tactic to succeed, and unless one is Tony Harrison, that is best left unattempted.[8] In this context it is easy to praise the efforts of 18th-century translators, who can be both literal and poetic, but they were living at a time when English poetry spoke with a heavily classicised "voice". The issue is what we do in the 20th century, when that classical "voice" is long since dead,[9] when the concept of "epic" is almost entirely alien to us, and (indeed) metre in the sense of anticipatable rhythmic patterns is scarcely in fashion.[10]

If we abandon poetry, we are left with prose. Some will call this pros[e]titution. I admit that it rankles to suggest giving the impression that all ancient literature was written in prose. Perhaps we should signal "poetry" typographically without claiming to be writing the stuff. But there is nothing wrong with English prose as a medium of communication. Far from it. While I concede that, in its command of register, prose is unable to control the range that poetry does, it is, in my view, a loss worth bearing for the other gains. I say that with regret. The intellectual and emotional "world" which a poem constructs for itself admits and validates a quite different complex of reactions from the "world" of prose. Much of that will be lost. But much more solid *res* will be retained in prose than, so far, has been retained in the efforts of those who tried to reproduce the poetry; and the translator who trusts Homer enough to let words and argument come through in good, contemporary English will find, miraculously, that the translation is not at all bad.

Most of the problems of translating Homer are not unique to him (or her, as Samuel Butler would insist). The cultural gap between Homer's world and ours, which led a critic such as C. S. Lewis to describe Achilles as "little more than a passionate boy" when he withdrew from the fighting in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, presents serious problems of acclimatisation to contemporary readers, but no more serious than those presented by Vergil, say—and in number probably considerably less. More than any other ancient author, Homer has the capacity to put his finger on and share common human experience. We need no commentator or literary critic to tell us how to enjoy the simile deployed by Homer when Apollo destroys the Greek wall:

> "And he threw down the Achaians' wall with utter ease, as when a little boy knocks over sandcastles on the sea-shore—he builds them to play with in his childish way, and then amuses himself by flattening them again with hands and feet."

Though, of course, one has to be careful in these post-structural days. There is no knowing what deeply pensive alter-

---

[7] Penguin is to publish Pope's *Iliad*, complete with Pope's notes, in 1988. Felicity Rosslyn's useful *Pope's Iliad* (a selection with commentary) is published by Bristol Classical Press (1985).

[8] Consider, for example, Harrison's famous *Oresteia* (1981), in which the language of Aeschylus becomes the language of Anglo-Saxon epic.

[9] Compare Charles Martindale's toughly argued but, in my view, unsuccessful defence of 18th-century "metaphrase" (literal translation, or *verbum e verbo* translation as Martindale prefers to call it) in "Unlocking the word-hoard: in praise of metaphrase", in E. S. Shaffer, ed., *Comparative Criticism* (1984), vol. 6.

[10] Efforts to duplicate classical metres in English always fail. English metre works by a system of stress or accent, classical by one of syllable weight, in which *every* syllable counts. The two systems are incompatible. "Géntlemen áre not allówed to wálk on the gráss of the cóllege" is taken as the example of the classical dactylic/spondaic hexameter, but the first half could easily be scanned trochaic ("Géntlemén are nót allówed").

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Derrida will not urge us to consider the polarity between the temporary and the permanent innate in the concept of "sand" and "castle", and the exquisite irony which unites the two in one. And what of ancient attitudes towards sandcastles? Can we really *assume* they are the same as ours? The "castle" to 20th-century ears conjures up a deeply ambiguous image of feudal oppression on the one hand and. . . . Oh well.

BUT THERE IS ONE PROBLEM which the translator of Homer uniquely faces, and which goes to the very heart of the Homeric style and idiom. The translator faces it constantly, because it constantly recurs. It is the problem of Homeric repetitions.[11]

Briefly, and very simply. Poets composing in an oral tradition (i.e. without the aid of writing) need help if they are to rattle off a tale of Troy running to 15,000 Greek hexameters, in which the quantity of *every single syllable* is relevant to the successful scansion of the verse. It is an impossibility, clearly, unless one has learned a technique; and the technique, developed over hundreds of years of recitation, depends upon the successful memorisation and adaptation to context of thousands of fixed, hexametric ways of saying things. Hence all those Homeric repetitions: "swift-footed Achilles", "much-enduring Odysseus", "Agamemnon lord of men", "he fell thunderously and his armour clashed about him", "winged words". Repetition is not confined to the phrase or line: whole scenes, of arming and sacrificing and welcoming guests and eating (for example), can be shown to follow the same basic pattern, often with identical means of expression.

These are the "building-bricks" of the poet's trade. He did not invent them. He took them over from his masters when he learned his trade from them. And there they are: recurring again and again and again. Of the 27,000 lines or so which make up the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, some 9,000 are repeated. To repeat, therefore, or not to repeat?

But our problems do not end there. Even if we decide to repeat, will English allow us to? These "formulas", as they are called, tend to express perfectly simple ideas, the common and essential coinage of narrative or description ("he came", "he spoke", "he looked angry", "he threw his spear") but some of them do so in the most individual language ("he spoke winged words"), while others are used in such a strikingly wide variety of contexts that it is often difficult to produce one translation to cover all instances.

It is, of course, self-evident that individual *words* in one language do not occupy the same area of meaning as words in another. A difficult word in Greek like *sōphrōn* covers an area requiring any of the following translations (and then some) in English: "moderate, law-abiding, discreet, prudent, chaste, temperate, self-controlled, disciplined, sensible, modest. . . ." But the formulas are so commonplace, so frequently repeated, so much a part of the essence of Homer, that one yearns to translate them all in the same way.

A good example of the problems a translator faces in this context is the sentence: *luto gounata kai philon ētor* (lit. "released knees and dear/own heart"), i.e. "(his/her/their) knees and dear/own heart were released/loosened". A translator of Homer's *Odyssey* will find that formulaic utterance used in the following contexts.

(*1*) Where great danger, or imminent death, is faced (e.g. when Odysseus throws off his disguise and challenges the suitors to fight).

(*2*) Where tragic news is received (e.g. Penelope hears the suitors are planning to kill her son Telemachos).

(*3*) In recognition scenes (e.g. when Penelope recognises that it is indeed Odysseus who has returned).

Since the formula describes a reaction which involves the knees as well as the heart, we are presumably talking of a physical as well as an emotional reaction. English can do this: we talk of knees trembling or giving way, of hearts stopping or failing. The problem is to find an idiom which covers the tragic (*1*) and (*2*) and the joyful (*3*). "X's knees trembled, X's heart failed" will do very nicely for the suitors faced with death at the hands of Odysseus or Penelope hearing that Telemachos's life is threatened. But would one describe a *swimmer's* knees as "trembling" or "giving way", as happens when a stormed-tossed Odysseus hears the rollers smashing against the reefs? And does the idiom work for a person who has received joyful news? Such people may "collapse", their heart "stop". Perhaps we would do better to abandon "knees" altogether, and opt for "X's strength left X, X's heart stopped". This would cover three situations more satisfactorily, but still does not sit easily in *all* contexts.

I seek for an ideal solution. Most translators opt to bend with the wind of each situation. So Walter Shewring[12] offers "her knees and her heart alike failed her", "her knees failed her, her heart melted", "Odysseus felt his knees and his spirit quail", "the king's knees quailed and his heart sank". I do not myself think knees "quail" (E. V. Rieu is keen on them quaking[13]), and Shewring (like Rieu) gives us more options than we strictly need. Maybe it is hopeless to seek for a single translation of even such work-a-day formulas as these. But it is such an important feature of Homeric style that I think we should try harder in this respect.

To summarise: it will be clear from the above that in matters of a translation I am part purist, part modernist, and an emotional minimalist. I want the English to say what the Greek says and I can see no reason why it shouldn't. I want it said in clear, strong, idiomatic English. I would also like it to

[11] I ignore the problem of Homeric dialect, a unique mixture of Attic-Ionic, Aeolic and Arcado-Cypriot, which was restricted entirely to epic and never actually spoken. Arnold and Newman again crossed swords on the desirability of trying to represent this feature in an English translation. In his translation of Herodas's *Mimes* (Loeb, 1929), A. D. Knox (brother of Ronald and E. V., which may have something to do with it) attempted to reproduce the effect of Herodas's dialect (as if we could tell), with predictably risible results: "Whence gat she it?"—"Wilt bewray an I tell thee?", etc.

[12] *Homer: The Odyssey*, translated by Walter Shewring (The World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1980). This essentially prissy and inert translation cannot break free from the 19th century. Here Penelope addresses her nurse: "Why do you mock my sorrow thus, waking me now to hear this folly?"

[13] *Homer: The Odyssey*, translated by E. V. Rieu (Penguin, 1946). Rieu is a good, racy read but he trivialises, is cavalier about repetitions, and his particular brand of slang and cliché grates on every page.

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convey something of the poetry of the original, but entertain little hope that it will. On the whole, however, I regard this as an acceptable, though very regrettable loss. Homer is to be trusted. Say what the poet says in good English prose and something will come through.

Put it another way: the art of translation is a constant struggle between the *quid* and the *pro quo*. A translation cannot do it all. What are we going to jettison? Do we gain more than we lose by jettisoning this or that or the other? I would contend that above all else we must stay faithful to the words and argument of the original, and that prose is the least distorting form into which we can safely transfer that argument into English. Perhaps we are wrong to think of "translation" at all. "Rewriting in English", or even the despised "paraphrase", may be a better starting, but not finishing, point.

Let us now try these principles out on Martin Hammond's new *Iliad* translation. It is in prose (good start) and does not thee-thou all over the place (even better). The introduction to the world of Homeric values, to the conditions of oral

Ave atque Vale?

CLASSICS *is already in clear decline. One link with the ancient world is all but severed. Hardly more than 1,000 pupils took Greek at O-level this year. Over the past 20 years, the numbers sitting Latin have fallen steadily from more than 50,000 to around 20,000.*

By excluding Latin from the proposed national curriculum, Sir Ernst Gombrich wrote recently, we risk cutting loose our civilisation from its moorings. He and other campaigners for classical studies have been since accused of exaggeration, special pleading, elitism, even of taking a perverse delight in inflicting upon a new generation the pain of learning which they had to endure themselves.

It needs to be made clearer exactly what is at stake. Latin has been studied for different reasons at different times since the fourteenth century: first for the practical lessons in science and medicine which the ancient manuscripts contained; then for its Christian learning; for its value to historians, to art critics, to nationalists, Marxists, anthropologists and architects.

ENTHUSIASM FOR **Latin has fluctuated over those years—often suffering from the fatal combination of dry scholasticism and utilitarian neglect. But it has never been more in danger in Britain than it is today. We risk depriving future generations of the opportunity to place their own feet—for whatever purpose or pattern—on the floor of their own civilisation. It is that risk which makes the threat to Latin of a different kind to the threat to other so-called minority subjects.**

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED *is the curricular protection which will enable any secondary school that so chooses to offer Latin to pupils whose interest in the subject has been, or is capable of being, aroused. That is not the protection Mr Kenneth Baker is offering. In fact, he is not offering any protection at all. . . . Latin will be in the same no-man's land as home economics, careers guidance, health education and road safety.*

THE TIMES (*London*)

THESE DAYS *the phrase* **Loquerisne Latine?** *is what the old Latin grammars used to describe as "a question expecting the answer 'No'." Time was when Latin was the* **lingua franca** *of Church, State, commerce, science and literature—the* **sine qua non** *of civilisation. Now with scarce an* **Eheu!**, *it has all but faded from the school* **curriculum** *and certainly plays no central part in Kenneth Baker's educational reforms.*

Must we say ***Ave atque vale*** *to Latin? No. Let Mr Baker appoint itinerant teachers, like the sophists of old, to visit one school each day on a weekly cycle, to cater inexpensively and economically for Latin and other minority subjects that might otherwise be lost. And let the EEC, in recognition of its history and heritage, sing,* **una voce,** *"Auld Lang Syne" together:*

Sodalitatis veteris
Cur immemor ero?
Cur temporis praeteriti
Fiet oblivio?

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

WITHOUT MAKING ***ad hominem*** **remarks, I can construct a** ***prima facie*** **case for the adoption of Latin as a** ***sine qua non*** **of education;** ***ad lib.*** **perhaps but surely** ***nem. con.***

Once our leaders spoke and thought almost as much in Latin and Greek as they did in English.

The Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston won a celebrated vote of confidence in Parliament in 1850 in an oratorical tour-de-force defending an act of gun-boat diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The speech lasted four and a half hours and culminated in the ringing phrase "*Civis Britannicus sum*", which brought the house down.

Sir Charles Napier, announcing his conquest of the Indian province of Sind, is alleged to have dispatched a punning one-word message: "*Peccavi*" (I have sinned). The worldwide maintenance of order and peace by the British Empire was widely dubbed the *Pax Britannica*.

IS IT *pure coincidence that when Latin dominated the curriculum Britain governed a quarter of the globe and was the industrial workshop of the world?*

As to relevance, there is nothing more relevant to the needs of Britain than the creation of a civilised population, fluent in language and thought, who can discipline their minds and channel their mental energies in the right direction. Learning is not always easy. Nor should it be.

The tender-minded might complain that ancient narratives are often overly concerned with war. So what? We need a martial spirit. For there is a war to be fought in this country—a war against ignorance and apathy, against mean-spiritedness and poverty of aspiration.

IT IS TIME **for the legions of Rome to march again, armed with grammar, vocabulary and etymology, to rout and vanquish the fainthearts and the Philistines.** ***Floreat Latina.***

Jeffrey Richards
in the DAILY MAIL (*London*)

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poetry recitation, and to the dramatic sweep of the whole poem is brilliantly done. This groundwork is important. No one reads epic these days. People must be prepared.

I have chosen a brute of a passage. Hector has challenged the Greeks to a single combat, and no Greek can rise to it. Menelaos breaks the embarrassed silence (*Iliad*, 7.94-102):

> "But then finally Menelaos stood up and spoke among them, scorning them to shame, and groaning in the sorrow of his heart: 'Oh you braggarts, mere women of Achaia now, no longer men! Oh, this will be ruin and disgrace indeed, the horror of horrors, if not one of the Danaans will now go to face Hektor. Well, may you all rot into water and earth, each one of you who sits on here in stark ignominy, spiritless. I myself shall arm against this man—the threads of victory are not in our hands, they are held above, among the immortal gods.'"

This will not do.

Line 1 "then finally": the Greek says "after a long time", which is clearer.

Lines 1-2 "among them": not in the Greek.

Line 2 "scorning them to shame": the Greek says "abusing them with insults", which is not the same thing.

Lines 2-3 "groaning in the sorrow of his heart": the Greek says "he groaned greatly in his heart". "In his heart" means that no sound comes out. These are emotions he is feeling.

Line 3 "Oh": the Greek begins with a cry of despair. Is "Oh" strong enough?

Line 3 "braggarts": not contemporary English.

Lines 3-4 "mere women of Achaia now, no longer men!": a mouthful (three words in Greek: Greek-women, no-longer Greek-men).

Lines 4-5 "Oh . . . horrors": as insults, these words ring very unconvincingly in my ears.

Line 7 "rot into": the Greek says "turn into". The whole curse may be the equivalent of "rot you all", but combining that with the Greek "into water and earth" (i.e. "where you come from") is not comfortable English idiom.

Line 8 "in stark ignominy, spiritless": these are weak insults. The Greek says "without heart, without reputation/fame". These suggest that the Greeks no longer have the courage or pride to win the glory which alone justifies heroic privilege and brings immortal fame.

Line 9 "threads of victory": the Greek could mean this, but it is not a comfortable piece of English idiom. The Greek word for "threads" also means "execution, completion, achievement". That meaning sits more easily here.

Lines 9-10 "Not in our hands" is redundant—perhaps taken over unconsciously from Fitzgerald.

Insults are desperately difficult to translate from one language into another. Martin Hammond has stuck close to the Greek, but he has, in my view, buried himself too deep in the dictionary and commentary to feel what he has written. We just do not insult each other like this. Yet it is perfectly possible to keep faith with the argument of the Greek and utter insults with the genuine ring of abuse about them.

"Eventually Menelaos stood up and spoke out. He poured abuse and insults on them, but there was great sadness in his heart as he did so: 'I despair of you Achaians. Loud-mouths! Women! Not a man anywhere! Here is dishonour, the humiliation to end all humiliations, if no Greek will now step up to face Hector in battle. Very well. You can all crawl back to the mud you came from, every spineless man-jack of you—just sitting there. Where's your pride? I shall arm *myself* for combat with Hector. But the outcome lies in the hands of the immortal gods above.'"

This reads like abuse and misses nothing important in the Greek. True, it runs the risk of being undignified and clichéd ("man-jack"). But Menelaos, uniquely in the *Iliad*, is genuinely angry here. A change of register is justified. Rieu too goes this way:

> "At last Menelaus, after many an inward struggle, rose to his feet and reproached them bitterly. 'What does this mean, you women of Achaea—I cannot call you men—who used to be so ready with your threats? Not a single Danaan willing to meet Hector? This is infamy, this is utter degradation! Very well then, sit there and rot, the whole crowd of you, inglorious cowards to a man—and I will arm and fight him myself. The issue lies with the gods above.'"

Rieu plays fast and loose with the structure (both Hammond and I have kept close to the order of the Greek clauses), overinterprets (for Rieu, Menelaos groaning in his heart becomes "after many an inward struggle"), and leaves out too much. But the overall effect is right.

Fitzgerald, as usual, gets almost everything wrong:[14]

> *. . . at length Lord Menelaus arose*
> *groaning in disgust, and stormed at them:*
> *"Oh god, you brave noise-makers! Women, not men!*
> *Here is disgrace and grovelling shame for us*
> *if none of the Danaans fight with Hector!*
> *May you all rot away to earth and water,*
> *sitting tight, safe in your ignominy!*
> *I will myself tie on a breastplate with him.*
> *Out of our hands, in the gods' hands above us,*
> *ultimate power over victory lies."*

"Groaning in disgust" is simply wrong. "Noise-makers" is not a term of abuse that I am acquainted with. "And grovelling shame" is hot air (the Greek is odd, but the idea of one disgrace being heaped on another seems to be implicit: Fitzgerald ignores it). "Sitting tight, safe in your ignominy" is impressionistic flannel. Fitzgerald's unerring sense of the fatuous produces an outright winner in the hilarious "I will myself tie on a breastplate with him", and "Out of our hands" is pure line-filling rodomontade. As verse, the lines hop about like one-legged kangaroos and may as well be written in prose for all the effect they convey. This is what happens when a "poet" gets to work on Homer. And he wins literary prizes for it.

[14] *Homer: The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald (The World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1984).

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Richmond Lattimore[15] holds the ship steady as she goes:

But now at long last Menelaos stood forth and addressed them
in scorn and reproach, and stirred within the heart to great sorrow:
"Ah me! You brave in words, you women, not men, of Achaia!
This will be a defilement upon us, shame upon shame piled,
if no one of the Danaans goes out to face Hektor.
No, may all of you turn to water and earth, all you
who sit by yourselves with no life in you, utterly dishonoured.
I myself will arm against this man. While above us
the threads of victory are held in the hands of the immortals."

There is Hammond's accuracy here; and the verse-form does not intrude or distort. But the archaising ("stood forth", "Ah me!", "shame upon shame piled") and portentousness ("stirred within the heart to great sorrow"), while enabling "winged words" and suchlike to stand, give a hollow ring to the whole. Again, there is a tendency for the verse, rather like the sentiments, to clump ("who sit by yourselves with no life in you, utterly dishonoured" lacks the whiplash), and Lattimore's closeness to the Homeric form can lead to ugliness. Still, Lattimore has held the field for over 30 years now. Maybe the compromises and archaisms have worked.

LET US TRY Hammond, then Lattimore, on a narrative stretch (*Iliad*, Book 16, lines 462-491):

"When they had advanced to close range, Patroklos cast and hit famous Thrasymelos, the brave lieutenant of lord Sarpedon, in the lower belly, and collapsed his strength. Sarpedon then made his attack. He missed the man with his shining spear, but the spear struck Pedasos the horse in the right shoulder: he shrieked as the life breathed from him, and fell screaming in the dust, and his spirit flitted away. The other two horses shied apart, so the yoke creaked and their reins tangled together, now the trace-horse was lying in the dust. Automedon the famous spearman found the remedy for this: he drew the long sharp sword from beside his thick thigh, and with a quick dash cut away the trace-horse without delay. The others then straightened, and pulled in the harness. And the two men joined again in heart-consuming battle.

Once more Sarpedon missed with his shining spear: the point of the spear passed over Patroklos' left shoulder and did not hit him. Then after him Patroklos rose to his cast, and the weapon did not fly wasted from his hand, but struck him where the midriff is close to the beating heart. He fell as an oak-tree falls or a poplar, or a tall pine which carpenters cut down in the mountains with fresh-whetted axes to make a ship's timber. So he lay there stretched flat in front of his horses and chariot, bellowing, and clutching at the blood-soaked dust. Like a bull that a lion kills in attack on the herd, gleaming and proud among the shambling cattle, and it dies roaring under the jaws of the lion, so the leader of the Lycian shield-fighters struggled as he died at Patroklos' hands."

Hammond's "lieutenant" (line 2) does not sound right on the Homeric battle-field, and "collapsed his strength" (lines 3-4)—"released his knees", literally—is no more English than "as the life breathed from him" (lines 6-7). "Flitted" (line 8) reminds me of fly-spray. "Thick thigh" (line 13) is ugly ("massive"? "great"?), and "with a quick dash cut away the trace-horse without delay" (lines 13-14) is clotted. "Rose to his cast" (lines 19-20) is the sort of thing a fish does. "Gleaming . . . cattle" (line 28), fine in itself, needs to be more closely joined to "bull" to avoid confusion. But the pickings are thin, and the virtues of this passage seem to me to be many. It reads easily but misses nothing, it is accurate, the action never flags.

Lattimore, quite apart from the falsely archaic air, strikes me as inferior in other ways to Hammond:

Now as these two advancing had come close to each other
there Patroklos threw first at glorious Thrasymelos
who was the strong henchman of lord Sarpedon, and struck him
in the depth of the lower belly, and unstrung his limbs' strength.
Sarpedon with the second throw then missed with the shining
spear, but the spear fixed in the right shoulder of Pedasos
the horse, who screamed as he blew his life away, and went down
in shrill noise into the dust, and the life spirit flittered from him.
The other horses shied apart, the yoke creaked, the guide reins
were fouled together as the trace horse lay in the dust beside them;
but at this spear-famed Automedon saw what he must do
and wrenching out the long-edged sword from beside his big thigh
in a flashing stroke and without faltering cut loose the trace horse
and the other horses were straightened out, and pulled in the guide reins,
and the two heroes came together in the heart-perishing battle.
Once again Sarpedon threw wide with a cast of his shining
spear, so that the pointed head overshot the left shoulder
of Patroklos; and now Patroklos made the second cast with the brazen
spear, and the shaft escaping his hand was not flung vainly

[15] *The Iliad of Homer*, translated by Richmond Lattimore (University of Chicago Press, 1951).

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but struck where the beating heart is closed in the arch
of the muscles.
He fell, as when an oak goes down or a white poplar,
or like a towering pine tree which in the mountains the
carpenters
have hewn down with their whetted axes to make a
ship-timber.
So he lay there felled in front of his horses and chariots
roaring, and clawed with his hands at the bloody dust;
or as
a blazing and haughty bull in a huddle of shambling
cattle
when a lion has come among the herd and destroys him
dies bellowing under the hooked claws of the lion, so
now
before Patroklos the lord of the shield-armoured
Lykians
died raging. . . .

"Advancing had come close to each other" is very close to the Greek but plods (a general fault); "unstrung his limbs' strength" (line 4) jingles clumsily. The repeated "with" (line 5) is ugly, and "fixed in" (line 6) is too static for a spear-cast. We need a full-stop after "horse" (line 7). "In shrill noise" (line 8) is not English, "life spirit" sounds '60s hippy, and "flittered" sounds to me as trivial as Hammond's "flitted". The Greek says "away flew his spirit". If we do not like that (why, I wonder?), try "took wing" or "took flight"; or let us emphasise the speed of the take-off with the simpler "fled"; or, since Greeks often envisaged the "spirit" as a smoky sort of substance, we may wish to emphasise its ephemerality—"faded" or "vanished", perhaps. (Fitzgerald, deploying every poetic and imaginative resource available to him, produces even by his own high standards a translation of majestic ineptitude: "the spirit left him with a wing-beat". I suppose this is the poetic equivalent of "flapped off".)

"Fouled together" (line 10) is not clear, nor is "pulled in the guide reins" (line 14), though Lattimore's 13th line is clearer than Hammond's. I feel the need for a full-stop at the end of line 14, and "again" somewhere in line 15. "Pointed head overshot" (line 17) is clumsy, and lines 19-20 plod. "Blazing and haughty" to describe a bull (line 26) is almost Fitzgeraldian and for "claws" (line 28) read "jaws". "Before" (line 29) does not carry the point of the Greek ("at the hands of"), and "died raging" (line 30) misses the change in direction of the Greek simile. We should expect the simile to run "As a bull dies . . . so Sarpedon died", but Homer gives us "As a bull dies . . . so Sarpedon raged, dying". The *manner* of the bull's death (line 28—"bellowing under the (jaws) of a lion") has influenced Homer to change the direction of the simile to describe the *manner* of Sarpedon's death. Such changes of direction are common in Homer.

LET ME MAKE a confession at this point: some of my criticisms are nothing but matters of taste. What is striking and lively to another may well seem flabby and inert to me, and vice versa. We cannot escape this bind. Further, a theory of translation cannot but reflect the critic's own inabilities. I could not write a line of poetry if wild horses went down on their bended knees and entreated me in the name of heaven-and-earth to give it a whirl. That does not mean that I am hostile to the activity—far from it—nor that in an ideal world I would not much prefer a poetic translation of Homer to one in prose. But my experience is that "poetic" translations of Homer (and of most Greek literature, as a matter of fact) represent so little that is in Homer and are so far from anything I should dare to call "poetry" that the effort seems to me wasted. I shall be the first to cheer when proved wrong.

This brings me back to Richmond Lattimore. Here is a quasipoetic translation which has held the field for over 35 years. It appeals to Greek scholars, I suspect, because it keeps close to the Greek (and so to the line numbers of the Greek text), and looks like hexameters on the page. For non-Greeks, the language is archaic enough to feel "alien" without ever becoming abstruse or absurd. Overall, the tone is consistently maintained, and the literal translation of Homeric idiom does not jar. In any terms, Lattimore's is an heroic effort and may well turn out to be the lasting, "classic" translation of Homer of the 20th century.

NEVERTHELESS, the more closely I look at Lattimore, the more awkward and falsely glamourised it seems. Martin Hammond is imperfect, of course; but for long stretches he shows what good, strong English prose can do. He trusts the poet and, within the limits of prose, lets him speak out. Here Hector, who has just foreseen with chilling clarity the destruction of Troy and his own death, takes his child Astyanax to his arms (*Iliad*, Book 6, lines 466 ff.):

> "So speaking glorious Hektor reached out to take his son. But the child shrank back crying against the breast of his girdled nurse, terrified at the sight of his own father, frightened by the bronze and the crest of horse-hair, as he saw it nodding dreadfully from the top of the helmet. His dear father and his honoured mother laughed aloud at this, and glorious Hektor took the helmet straight from his head and laid it gleaming bright on the ground. Then he kissed his dear son and dandled him in his arms, and said in prayer to Zeus and the other gods: 'Zeus and you other gods, grant that this my son may become, as I have been, pre-eminent among the Trojans, as strong and brave as I, and may he rule in strength over Ilios. And let people say, as he returns from fighting: "This man is better by far than his father." May he carry home the bloody spoils of the enemy he has killed, and bring joy to his mother's heart. . . .'"

To me at any rate, the simplicity and clarity of that piece of prose, which misses nothing in the Homer and still manages to convey something of its moving dignity and pathos, are worth far more than any amount of bogus poeticising.

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Brian Backman

The Plane in the Woods

He remembers a high-flying plane buzzing like a locust in the heat of August, although it was winter then, and mole-diggings at his feet so demented that in trying to imagine what drove the animal, as if that mattered, he'd given up in despair and wondered yet again why a village so close to the war had not been touched.

It lay off a kilometre or two, its orange roofs the only colour in the day, which was black and white. They looked drawn on tissue paper with a crayon, a picture of another place and time, or of a dream of things left alone; of an island, like England's, with peace in its self-containment.

He was deserting, and the reason he was doing so now, and not in some other place where it might have been easier to get away from the battalion unnoticed, had to do with the village. Every time he'd seen it since he'd come out to France in 1915, it had whispered his name. He'd put the oddity of that together with the fact that it was apparently unharmed when so many other villages the battalion had marched past were wrecked to the last brick, and after a while it'd got to be more than the only friendly landmark in the war. It began to look like the place. He'd always believed there was a place. If you found it, you were safe.

And then today, going past it on his way up the lines once more, he'd made up his addled mind. Looking up at the plane away and blithe above it all, he'd decided he'd gone far enough. He'd done his share. And he couldn't go on any more. So he'd waited in the woods until the battalion had finished its halt, re-formed on the road and marched on. Then he'd run.

He'd climbed awkwardly over a wooden fence and wished he'd had enough of the courage of his conviction to leave his kit and gun behind. Together, they weighed more than seventy pounds and the ground was soggy from melted snow. No matter how he tried to pick his way, his feet sank. The danger was that he was in full view of the road behind him. Any officer happening along it and worth his salt would spot him at a glance and want to know what he was supposed to be doing.

The soldier hurried on, panting, and then he stopped. Something blue, out of place—foreign—shining up at him from the ground, caught his eye. Unsteadily, knees shaking from nerves and abuse, he bent down and picked it up, an empty packet of cigarettes. They were German. He wiped sweat from his eyes and squinted at some woods up a rise on his left. There were rumours all up and down the lines about French being in cahoots with the Boche, the country lousy with spies. His intuition whispered that his death as a soldier had only ever been going to come like this, because he would do something stupid to make it happen—as he had, caught here with the road at his back and the woods up there, watching him.

He took a deep breath. There was nothing sinister about the fags. There were no Germans cooking sausages up in the woods. Whoever'd taken the smokes off a dead Heinie had dropped them here, that was all; some worn-out book-binder never going to get home to Middlesex again, and smoking anything he could light and suck on, like him.

Only there never would have been a packet of German cigarettes in his pocket. He did not pick things up. He did not meddle, ever. He had an idea that you might be unlucky just passing through, but changing anything around was fatal. He hurried on.

Then in the woods he found the aeroplane. He had no business being in the woods. They had nothing to do with his getting across the fields into the village. It was just that one arm of the trees did stick out into the grass like an invitation for cover from the road and, besides, he also needed to move his bowels.

Somebody'd covered the machine over with a big, dirty tarpaulin. Then they'd piled underbrush in front of its wheels to camouflage them. He'd only noticed all this because in squatting he had been looking straight at the thing and after a while he'd got to wondering what it was. Then when he'd taken a look under the canvas, he'd found it hadn't crashed. It wasn't even damaged. It had been rolled into the woods on a woodcutter's road behind it.

It was hidden. It was German.

Appalled, feeling wearied to collapse with panic and this revelation of his poisoned luck, the soldier backed

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up among the trees the way he'd come, breathing by the thimbleful. The woodcutter's road offered a terrible temptation because it was the quickest way out of this trap he'd blundered into. Also, there was ice here in the shadows among the trees, ready to go off like a shot if he were foolish enough to step on it. But he knew if the Heinies had guards out anywhere, they were sure to be watching that road.

He came to the edge of the woods. It wasn't where he'd entered them. He found himself looking down upon the village. He saw about forty farmhouses huddled round a square and a red brick church. He could see chickens. Dogs barked. In front of the church, two people sat at a fountain, brushing milk pails. Fresh eggs, he thought.

There had been pockets of old snow in the folds of tarpaulin spread over the plane. It hadn't snowed for two weeks. The canvas had been guyed down in several places, quite makeshift, with what'd looked like cow tethers from a barn. But two of them had been hanging loose like Irish pennants, sprung by the wind. If enough wind got into the trees, the whole kit and caboodle would blow off. Was the machine unattended? He concentrated, listening for any noise in the woods behind him in case someone was coming after him.

Nothing. No one. The plane had been abandoned.

He knew his duty. It shouted at him. He was meant to turn around, make tracks, and report the plane. Right now. Instead, he stepped out of the woods. Why were the French hiding the plane? Because they were scared of the Germans breaking through. The front was only forty kilometres south-east. Standing cutting straw in these fields, they'd listen to the guns all day, wondering who was pounding who. And if it turned out to be the Germans, they'd get a plane given back to them by the nearest mayor when they arrived. Keep the village safe. Sure. Why not? Wasn't everybody trying to stay alive?

The soldier stopped and stood still. He grimaced in spite of himself. No shot rang out at his back from the trees though, never mind the fine target he made. There were no spies in the wood. Lazy exhalations from the village's chimneys reassured him. The church bell struck twice and its homely banality said: "You're home, come in."

Peace! he thought.

THE SOLDIER was sitting on the steps of the church beside his gun and kit, looking determinedly inoffensive. The priest came out of the church, whose door the soldier had found locked.

"I didn't realise you were here", the priest said in good English. "Was there something you wanted?"

"A rest, Father." The soldier stood up in respect. "I was just sitting here. I was thinking that you wouldn't even know there's a war on, let alone just over the hills."

"Do you really think so?" The priest turned to the houses around them. "Their sons are dead, every single one of them. A little farming village like this lives on its sons, and now there are none left. Just old people and grandchildren, except that the grandchildren have been taken away to safety by their mothers. The old people are alone."

Contrite, the soldier said: "I know nobody's let off that easily. I only meant that it does seem peaceful here, especially if you look at what's been done to other villages. I've gone up and down the road over there for months thinking that."

The priest nodded, contemplating the road. "They bivouac there sometimes, battalions like yours, in the grass by the road. They often come here. They want bread, chickens, eggs, whatever else. They have taken the horses. We've been left a cow. We have a few chickens too. I suppose it isn't so bad. They do pay for what they take, usually. Except that the old people worry how long before the army'll decide to billet the soldiers in the barns here. We've only escaped being shelled this long by the grace of God. Once the soldiers come to stay. . . ." He shrugged. "Are you sure you didn't come for something?"

"No", said the soldier. "Nothing."

"Are you allowed to be here, then?"

The soldier shook his head.

"Or gone this long?"

"No."

The priest considered him and hummed. He was a very young man whose fingers were tanned and long. His face was well weathered. The soldier found he approved of a cleric who got up off his knees and went out among his people, obviously in many weathers. The face was also tragically pock-marked. The man had perhaps nearly died of smallpox and then become a priest.

The priest said, "If you'd like to come across the square with me, I'll make you a cup of herb tea."

They sat facing each other over the priest's table, the tea finished. Nothing more was being offered.

The priest rose. "I'm sorry, Corporal, but I really think you ought to be on your way."

The soldier sat still. "I've nowhere to go, Father. You must realise that."

"Go back to your regiment. If you don't you'll be in very serious trouble."

The soldier grinned apocalyptically. "It's *my* neck."

Bending forward, the priest bore in on him. "That's all that concerns me." He straightened, waiting.

The soldier stayed where he was and brooded. Priests were meant to be kinder than this. It was part of the sanctuary they were meant to offer. What did it matter what army regulations had been sinned against? "Give me one more cup of tea, Father. Then I'll go peacefully."

He was surprised to be refused.

"I want you to leave right now", the priest said, "before they come looking for you."

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The soldier got up suddenly, hurt. "What's the matter, Father? Afraid they'll find the plane you've hidden up there in the woods, think you've a nest of spies hidden somewhere too?"

He was hardly surprised to see the priest startled. But, as if on impact, the man took a step backward. His long, elegant fingers took hold of the back of a wooden chair and clutched like a bird's talons at a windy perch. Softly, the priest asked, "Who else has seen it? Just you?"

"No one, for the moment", said the soldier. His voice quavered. The priest's guilty look shook him. What was going on?

The priest came around the chair and sat on it again, eyeing the soldier intently: "Are you going to report it?"

"No", said the soldier, and wished he hadn't. It would have made more sense to have said yes. To see what it would bring. Also not to be too meek. It might be dangerous. He'd given away that he knew their secret. "I don't think so, anyway." He thought to add: "Why? Haven't you?"

The priest shook his head. "They took care of the pilot here. He deserted."

This time it was the soldier who backed up involuntarily, only he was reaching for his gun. He'd stood it against the wall behind his chair. "Is he dead?"

"No", the priest said. "But they don't want to give him up now."

Stupid! Spies. "The German's here, Father, right now, in this village?"

The priest nodded. "I'm afraid so."

The soldier was getting a hammering from his instinct about keeping fear out of this room now it'd been confirmed: he was a menace to these people. But he was a riot of fear inside. "Are the French shooting prisoners these days, Father?", he asked, getting his pack on clumsily. He was leaving all right.

"No", said the priest. "Of course not. They are old people here, I told you. They are sick of the war. They simply decided not to give him up." He leaned across the table as if to carry the significance the better. "It's a remarkable thing. He stands for their lost sons, don't you see? To them he is only one more young man, not a soldier. Not even an enemy. If you consider. . . ."

"It's treason."

The priest's mouth moved. No sound came.

"Doesn't the German know that? They're all going to get shot as spies."

The priest said hoarsely, "He'll give himself up. That's always been the plan. That's why he hasn't destroyed the aeroplane. Without it, he'd have to be taken as a spy this far behind the lines. With it, he is only an unlucky pilot forced to land. He will roll the plane out of the woods whenever he chooses and announce himself accordingly. In those circumstances, I am sure it will be all right for the village. Especially given their losses. Who could doubt their loyalty? Their only-begotten sons, after all. . . ."

"We're supposed to be fighting for your bloody Samaritans, don't they know that yet?" The soldier had been looking out of the kitchen's one window on the church and the square. There was nobody. No one at all. What did that mean? He'd do better to keep his voice down, he thought. "The German's the one killed their sons", he hissed. "What about that?"

"It's only pity, Corporal."

"Pity! I'd like a bit of that just now if you don't mind, Father. Where's the back door?"

His mind foraged ahead. What were the obstacles to his getting out of here alive? They'd expect him to leave the village the way he'd come. If the German was going to be waiting for him. . . .

The priest said, "There is one right behind you, and you are perfectly at liberty to open it. But I should tell you that it leads straight into the kitchen of another family and. . . ."

"Never mind!" snapped the soldier. "I'll take the front door." He jerked his jaw. "Come on."

"Please try to think of him as someone just like yourself, just as frightened and looking for peace", the priest said, doing as he was ordered.

"He's a spy!" The soldier rounded on him. "He dropped his fags over by the road. He was sitting there counting all our bleeding guns going by. Tell him he's very careless. Also tell him Tommy said hello and how did he like the nice parade!"

The priest's shoulders sagged. "He doesn't take tobacco."

"Come on, Father. Hop to it!" It was no good; they were all crackers, this lot.

The priest went ahead of him into a chill corridor which linked the kitchen with the front door. Over his shoulder, he whispered: "The pilot will give himself up, I give you my word. Please don't make any trouble for the village. There is very little that can protect us from an angry army in the middle of a war."

They were at the door. "Just you let me out of here alive, Father, and I promise you on your Bible you will never, never hear from me again as long as you live."

He opened the door a crack to look out. The square around the fountain still seemed suspiciously deserted. Checking more carefully, however, he detected faces as pale and as secretive as ghosts watching from half a dozen recessed and dirty windows. He shut the door. "I'll get shot", he said flatly.

"You are wrong. Nobody wants to hurt you", the priest said. He put a hand meant to be reassuring on the soldier's arm. The soldier jumped. "For the love of God, don't shoot anybody. You're absolutely safe, I promise you that. Please believe me."

The soldier pushed the priest back angrily and

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opened the door. He sprinted off the step. He feinted a dash across the square but pivoted, running madly sideways instead. Luck gave him an alley. There was no one in it to stop him. It meant deliverance.

ADAMS IS STANDING by the door of his car, remembering the plane buzzing like a locust and the crazy mole-diggings. The field where he picked up the cigarettes is that one across the road. It was February then, now it is May. Then it was cold, now it is warm. Then it was fifty-seven years ago.

The village has its look of cozy self-containment still. Perhaps, in the end, the First World War spared it; the Second, too. And the copse, where he found the plane: Adams stands for some time contemplating it, remembering. Back in the battalion's encampment the night of his escape from the village, he'd found he hadn't even been missed. So he'd got away with it. And so had the German, for Adams hadn't dared tell where he'd been. In any case, once out of the village, he'd pitied the old people. They were wrong, but so was the war.

Getting back into his car, Adams remembers half a battalion ranked on the ground in 1916, dead. The military cemeteries he has visited in this, his only trip back to his old battlegrounds, all remind him of that cockeyed regimentation under a gas cloud. The cemeteries are a parody of the same futile decorum.

He drives to the village where the German was hiding, thinking: dotty, sentimental nonsense, this impulse. So frightened again at seventy-nine.

In front of the church, Adams asks a youngster: "Is there still a *curé*?"

"Only one who comes one Sunday a month", the youngster says.

Adams sits himself on the church steps, sighs, looks at his watch: 4.30. In fifteen minutes, he tells himself, I will leave. He is oddly impatient to be gone now that, after so many years, he has finally come back. His mind races. He is worried about time, schedules, diet, sleep; about vermin in his sheets at night, about his heart, nerves, age; about loneliness, about collapse—the prospect then of some untidy French hospital in which to end his days; about self-pity, fear; and all this, sitting on the steps of a church in the middle of nowhere.

No. This village. This church.

He'd looked for some sort of exemption here. The priest kicked him out. Damn the priest, he thinks, and wonders how his dream of sanctuary stood so much contradiction in the war he'd lived before the day he'd run and come here. On the other hand, the idea that it would be given to *him* in preference to any other soldier to find a place to hide had got him through the experience in one mental piece.

Every soldier must have worn his most hopeful fantasies as proof against machine-guns, Adams thinks. Young men did that better than old. What passed for self-sustaining illusion among the generals of the time, almost as old, as white-haired and bemused, as he is now? Perhaps they had none. If so, they all deserved to be enshrined for having braved such private horror.

Adams, at seventy-nine years of age, has no dreams, no precious deceptions of self to defend himself with. Not one. And it seems that none was forgotten here for him to come back and pick up now.

Ah. Here is a young man crossing one end of the square on a tractor. Adams waves. The driver, curious, alters course to come over to him. He turns off the engine.

PRESENTLY, Adams asks the farmer, "Do you know anything about the plane this village hid once in the woods during the war? A German plane?" He adds, ". . . in the First World War?"

Yes, the young man nods.

"I suppose it must be a well-known incident now", Adams encourages.

"Not so famous", says the farmer. "Most people have forgotten."

"Why did the German choose this village?"

"That I don't know", says the young man, rolling a cigarette. "He marked the place in daylight, I know that. It must have looked good to him from the air. Then he came back. He set his plane down in the moonlight. Nobody saw him come. Next morning, he was sitting in the church. My grandfather remembered it. The German asked if he could stay for a day. Then it was one more, and one more." He shrugs. "*Voilà*."

"What happened to him in the end?"

"He gave himself up."

"Oh, did he really?"

"Yes. He showed the Army the plane, so they wouldn't think he was a spy. Then he gave himself up."

"What happened to the village?"

"Nothing. The German never said a word about the village. That all came out later. Everybody thought he'd just landed. He'd been here for months, though."

"Nobody ever betrayed him while he was hiding here?"

"Nobody from the village, no", says the young man.

"Tell me why."

Adams knows why. He wants to hear the explanation again, given by someone else, having repeated it to himself all his life. More than that, he wants to discover what of that extraordinary watershed of village grief is to be found perpetuated in the look in this man's eyes when he gives it.

"Because they needed a priest. It was the middle of a war, they didn't know what was coming next, they. . . ."

"Priest!" cries Adams.

"I say, the one thing needed here most in that war was a priest. They were that close to the lines, they were scared to death. In this village in those days, there

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was nobody but old people. That's what happened. First the German asked them if he could stay one day. Next thing, he was saying Mass."

On this desperate errand to his past, fearful of losing his life to age without ever having been a hero to himself, Adams has been travelling in search of his lost faith of 1917.

Now he thinks: I was right about this village.

"Sometimes the German even said Mass for soldiers. Imagine", the young farmer explains.

They have been sitting on the church steps. Remembering the locked door, Adams twists himself round to look at it. "Then why did he give himself up?"

"One day an English soldier came along. The German found out he'd seen the plane up there in the woods. He knew the *salaud* was going to report him, so he left." He looks at Adams. "You're English."

"But I didn't report him!" Adams nearly shouts. Embarrassed, he stands up. "He could have stayed."

The young farmer considers this a long time. Then he nods. "Never mind, *Monsieur*. The war is over."

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Night-Watch

While my father chanted "Jamaica! Jamaica!"
In a poor imitation Caribbean accent
During a televised 400-metre heat,
I explained aside to the agency nurse
That he was born in Jamaica. Nurse Marsh smiled
Politely, prettily, a newly-wed blonde,
Her watch-dial pinned like a campaign medal.
Two ambulance-men manoeuvred the wheelchair

Out of the lift and next to the sick-bed.
One of them admired the balcony view:
Scots pine, grassy bank, mallow in flower.
The other crouched by the wooden fruit
Carved on the leg of the old hall table.
The phone rang often in the hot afternoon—
Offers to help from Beryl and Shirley.
The mind on the bed was drugged and wandered

To a childhood seaside holiday in Antrim.
Later we ate, three in the study,
Fried baby squid, mayonnaise, salad
And Riesling, followed by grapes and peaches.
Then we divided the night-watch between us.
I took till 4.00 and nodded off over
Mill on the Floss, Dodsons and Tullivers,
A Constable mill-wheel on the cover.

The next day the agency sent Jane Turner
Filling in time between Chepstow and Riyadh—
Jane who could name every one of the flowers,
Even love-in-a-mist and spiders-and-spoons
In the massive bouquet sent by the Centre.
My father showed me a scrap of confetti
Which fell from the pocket of the lightweight suit
Worn by Prince Charles to go away in.

My father intended to set the blue dot
As a paperweight in see-through plastic.
The Prince had spoken to my mother in her wheelchair
On what was her last appearance in public,
When he came to open the Bristol Centre.
And did I, walking to the car that evening,
Know it was the last time I had seen her?
Jamaica, Jamaica and love-in-a-mist.

Duncan Forbes

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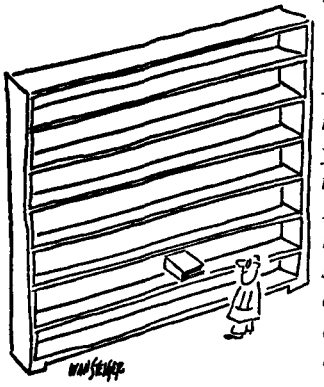
Hope & Despair in the Soviet System (II)

Vladimir Bukovsky & George Urban

1. The Enemy Within



URBAN: *Aren't we, at this point, back to "Soviet Man" again —a formula for irresponsibility and cynicism? You said in your book that every citizen of the USSR harbours "a Soviet Man in his soul". One suspects that most people hate themselves for tolerating this hidden enemy; hence much of the collective schizophrenia of Soviet life. At the same time, however, they realise that the maintenance of law and order, now that the Soviet system is an established fact, depends on the survival of this enemy within. It is not a dilemma I'd like to live with. ... .*

BUKOVSKY: Again, it's not a straightforward dilemma; it's a *Soviet* dilemma.

Let me illustrate what I mean. One of the most fervently pursued aims of Soviet educational and psychological conditioning is to render the citizen helpless.

—*To atomise society. . . .*

BUKOVSKY: Yes, you put a man in a cell and tell him that there is no escape from it—that is the prototypical situation. In ordinary life this helplessness assumes milder forms; these can, however, be just as devastating.

Take the notion of Soviet "elections". My release from one of my imprisonments, I think in 1966, coincided with "elections". To go or not to go to the voting stations is a headache for most citizens. You will not be sent to prison if you don't, but you are made to feel that you are a bit of a fool, a fusspot, and a pedant. How is that done? Well, your local election people will come up to you and say:

"Please, comrade, come and get it over with. You really have to do it. You see, if you don't we'll be obliged to go on haranguing you until midnight. You would be punishing *us*, not the government, and why should you want to do that? These are not *our* elections; *we* haven't invented them. But we have children at home who have to be fed, and if you go on being difficult, how can we get home on time? . . ."

They will give you this cynical and maudlin stuff until you can't stand it any longer and go to the voting booths out of a sense of exasperation and pity for these wretched propagandists.

Well, in this particular case, I told my agitators that I really couldn't go and vote for the government—it was against my nature and all my convictions.

"Oh, never mind your convictions", they assured me. "We understand your doubts. But please, just go to the voting station and write anything you like on your ballot paper." So, reluctantly, I went off to vote.

"And what do I do to vote *against*?", I asked one of the

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY, *after having served some ten years in Soviet prisons, labour camps, and "psychiatric" institutions, was exchanged for a Chilean Communist Party leader (in Zurich, 1976). He was educated at Moscow State University, and his efforts on behalf of Russian political prisoners and human rights brought him into conflict with the Soviet authorities. Dina Kaminskaya, the valiant Moscow lawyer who defended many dissidents in their court cases, has written an illuminating account of Bukovsky and the others in her book "Final Judgment" (1985); see Lev Kopelev's article "One Moscow Lawyer"* (ENCOUNTER, *September-October 1985). Since his departure from Russia, Bukovsky has carried out research work at the Department of Psychology at Stanford University and has written a number of books, among them his autobiographical memoir, "To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter" (André Deutsch, 1978), which has been translated into Swedish, Italian, Spanish, French, and German.*

GEORGE URBAN'S *contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include conversations with Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W. Averell Harriman (November 1981), Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981), Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981), and Milovan Djilas (December 1979). The first part of this conversation with Vladimir Bukovsky appeared in the November 1987 issue.*

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officials. "Just cross out the name printed on your ballot paper", he said.

So I borrowed his pen, crossed out the name of the one and only candidate, and dropped my vote into the box. I felt that I had demonstrated my displeasure. But had I?

I shouldn't have knuckled under. I should have said, "To hell with your faked elections". But that is where the Soviet Man in my soul got the better of me. I accepted the situation because it seemed unalterable and I had been rendered helpless.

"What difference would it make if I refused to vote?", I thought to myself; and that is a fatal thing to feel. Multiplied by 200 million, it makes for the preservation of the Soviet system.

—Would you say Soviet Man is a specifically Soviet-Russian phenomenon, or would Soviet Man arise in any Communist country? Would a Roman or a Londoner become Soviet Man too?

BUKOVSKY: Absolutely. Soviet Man is not a product of Russian culture or the Russian race, if that's what you're driving at. It could happen anywhere, and in some countries it might happen much faster than it did in my country. It is bound up with the nature of Communism, as you and Alain Besançon have recently demonstrated.[1]

—But many distinguished historians and observers of the Soviet Union hold the view that abject Soviet Man is, to a degree, a hangover from serfdom.

BUKOVSKY: I don't think he is. Historians are usually clever people who believe that the ordinary man is as conscious of the past as they are. He is not; he is normally ignorant and uninterested. If you were to ask a simple Russian in the Soviet Union today, "What do you know about serfdom?", he would probably say that he had a vague recollection of what he had been taught about it at school, but that sort of knowledge would not influence his behaviour.

BUT WOULDN'T HE *have inherited certain cultural attitudes? Wouldn't, for example, obedience to authority and the acceptance of paternalism be part of his heritage? We saw in Mao's China that Confucianism, with its respect for discipline and the veneration of one's forebears and elders, melted invisibly into the amalgam of "Maoism". Chinese Communism would be unthinkable without these influences.*

BUKOVSKY: These are, to my mind, elements that can be found in any culture and can be encouraged to rise to the surface in the mind of any human being. Most of us succumb to violence or the threat of violence. Under certain conditions, most of us feel helpless or want to feel helpless. If you saw a friend of yours shot before your eyes for having done or said something that did not please the authorities, you'd think twice before repeating his offence, unless, of course, you had decided to be a kamikaze and wanted to court the risk of suicide—as we did. We did so as a matter of conscious decision, but most people don't want to take that risk. Let me assure you that any human being would become Soviet Man under Soviet conditions, and I am certain that the ordinary American would become "Soviet Man" much faster than we did. Much faster.

—I cannot share that view, but I very much share your insistence that the only way in which the man-in-the-street can keep his integrity in tolerable order is to refuse to cooperate with the system. And we have just seen from the example you have given how very difficult that can be even for a man of your courage and intelligence.

Bear with me if I reinforce your observations about "helplessness" with another example that impressed me. In his introduction to the bilingual edition of the poems of Marina Tsvetaeva, Professor Robin Kemball relates the tragic story of this most gifted of 20th-century Russian poets, who, after a short and tormented life in Western Europe and the USSR, committed suicide in the town of Elabuga in the Tatar Republic in 1941.

> **". . . Alexander Gladkov, recalling a conversation he had with Pasternak a few months after Tsvetaeva's death (it took place on February 20, 1942), quotes him in his memoirs as saying: 'I am to blame for not dissuading her at the time from returning to the Soviet Union. What awaited her here? She lived like a beggar in Paris, she died like a beggar amongst us. But over here even worse was in store for her—the senseless, unspeakable tragedy of the annihilation of all her dear ones, which I still can't find the courage to discuss.' When Gladkov asked who was to blame for the fact that Tsvetaeva, back in her own country, had been condemned to lead the lonely, unsheltered existence that led to the tragedy of Elabuga, Pasternak (without a moment's hesitation) is said to have replied: 'I am!'—and then added: 'We are—all of us. I, and Aseev, and Fedin, and Fadeev. And all of us. . . . We were full of good intentions, but we did nothing, consoling ourselves with the thought that we were helpless. Oh, it is so convenient sometimes to think one is helpless. The State and ourselves. It can do everything, and we—nothing. Time and again, we decided we were helpless—and went off to have a meal. For most of us, it didn't even spoil our appetite. That is our common crime, the result of our criminal egoism.'"**

This shows your diagnosis of Sovietism as a low-intensity creeping disease to be absolutely right.

BUKOVSKY: It *is* a good example. Sloth and indifference are powerful ingredients of our nature. It's so much easier not to notice things than to notice them. The first doesn't require you to take action. The second does, and that can be uncomfortable for your conscience and take away from your prime TV time. It is, therefore, tempting to fall in with Sovietisa-

[1] See, in ENCOUNTER (May and June 1987), George Urban and Alain Besançon, "Language & Power in Soviet Society".

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tion. It appeals to your sense of inertia and your instinct to go for the easy way out.

Perhaps the most difficult part of running against Sovietisation is the sense of ridicule to which rejecting it exposes you. You don't become, in average Soviet eyes, an heroic dissident, but a figure of fun. This can be more lethal to your morale than the fear of the *KGB* or Siberia.

And why do you become a figure of ridicule? Because you are thought to be tilting at windmills, resisting what is irresistible, and, not least, because you're wasting everyone's time. If you start making difficulties at meetings by speaking against some resolution that everyone knows has been handed down from above and has to be rubber-stamped, well, you are keeping busy and exhausted people from doing their shopping—and shopping in the Soviet Union is a full-time occupation. And why are you keeping them there? Because you want to satisfy some silly individual whim of yours. So, "Don't make an ass and a nuisance of yourself", your fellow citizens will sneer at you, and that is a powerful disincentive. I always felt it to be more powerful than the threat of arrest.

Another factor that keeps many people obedient and Sovietised is the pursuit of their talent—real or imagined. How do you exercise your talent in a totalitarian system? Only by going along with the system, because it alone can provide you with a stage, a platform, a publishing house, a microphone.

Of course, the devil never asks for too much. You are, in the beginning, asked to make only very small concessions, but those are enough to align you with the system and start you on your way to complete Sovietisation. One educated fellow I met in prison said to me:

"Why do so many people feel they must become dancers, singers, writers and so on, kowtowing to the régime in the service of their alleged talent? Why can't they be satisfied with being workers on the assembly line or garbage collectors? That wouldn't involve them in betraying their conscience. . . ."

The answer is that talented people feel that bringing out whatever they have in them is more important than guarding their integrity. There's the rub.

THIS DOES SEEM *to me a rather Russian phenomenon. In Eastern Europe it was precisely the "talented" people—writers, journalists, television producers—who were the first to refuse to be wrapped around by the system and started those momentous movements of dissent and resistance that eventually resulted in the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the Czechoslovak upheavals of 1968—and who are now leading the dissent in Yugoslavia. And, again in contrast to the Soviet Union, they are looked upon by the people not as mavericks who are making themselves ridiculous by being out-of-step with the complicity of the ordinary person, but as respected vehicles of national consciousness and democratic values.*

[2] See, in ENCOUNTER (December 1986, January 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya in conversation with George Urban.

Why is it that the majority of Russian people do not identify passionately with distinguished dissidents such as yourself, or Solzhenitsyn or Orlov or Sinyavsky or Sakharov? Is it, as Galina Vishnevskaya told us,[2] because they are jealous of anyone wanting a better or even just a different sort of life? If so, does this betray a commendable sense of egalitarianism under conditions of general hardship, or just straightforward bloody-mindedness?

BUKOVSKY: It isn't the case that the ordinary Russian does not identify with us. The Soviet Union is a vast country. Unlike Poland or Hungary, it is heterogeneous—there are 130 nationalities on its territory with almost as many languages and customs. These nations and nationalities have their own heroes and dissidents. Like your Hungarians in 1956 and Czechoslovaks in 1968, the majority of our dissidents tend to wrap themselves in their national colours and fight the Soviet system first and foremost as oppressed nations and nationalities.

MIGHT THEY *be preparing to repeat the pattern of the 1848-49 revolutions in considering their demands for national independence to be one and the same thing as their quest for democracy? Hungary in 1956 was, in the judgment of historians like Hugh Seton-Watson and Melvin J. Lasky, very much like that.*

BUKOVSKY: That's what we are beginning to witness. But coming back to popular support for Russian dissent—we cannot, in the absence of figures, really tell how much support we have, or would have. Nor can we really claim that the intellectual type of dissident enjoys general support in Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia the protestors are more concerned with national and even separatist issues than human rights, and dissenters like Milovan Djilas, though respected, carry no public influence. In Czechoslovakia, too, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that "Charter 77" has anything like mass appeal. The tendency to lie low and conform until circumstances make it safe not to is not a peculiarly Russian trait.

But, as I say, we do have support in the Soviet Union. I can't tell you how widespread it is, and I don't know how public opinion would react if an opening occurred for radical change. But here are some impressions.

I once spent time in camp with a large number of ordinary criminals. They represented a cross-section of Russian society, and were in the majority decent people who had fallen foul of the law by stealing food for their families or helping themselves to some building materials at their work-place. There was a *muzhik* I got to know rather well who had pinched three buckets of bran for his children and got three years—a year per bucket, as his judge had tactfully told him.

Well, one day the sentence of an influential inmate was up and he was being released. He called his gang and made a little speech by way of a valedictory. He pointed to me and said: "Whatever you do, protect this man because he's in for

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the common good—he speaks for all of us." I was amazed. I never expected him to speak like that—I had had very little contact with him.

Another example. Towards the end of 1971 I was on hunger strike in the central *KGB* prison in Moscow. I was having a legal squabble with the authorities because they had refused to agree that I should be defended by a lawyer of my own choice. As the Governor diplomatically explained to me, anyone going on a hunger-strike was on a suicide mission—and to make that point absolutely clear, he put me in a cell where others normally awaited execution. A delicate touch, that.

My cell was a horrible, small, kennel-like establishment with all the "furniture" screwed to the ground so that you could do no damage to yourself or the warders. I will not treat you to the details of force-feeding because this was a form of deliberate torture, and it would, I'm sure, make you sick to be told the methods the *KGB* thugs used on me. The idea was to make the feeding so horrifying that you'd give up any idea of staying on hunger-strike.

One night, about ten days into my strike and after a particularly gruelling session, I was in great pain and lay awake. In the small hours of the morning, I suddenly heard the trapdoor open. One of the *KGB* guards was standing there looking concerned.

"What made you go on hunger-strike?" he asked.

I explained why I'd been arrested and how I was trying to defend myself.

"I was sure you'd done nothing", he said. He was visibly moved by my story and the pitiful figure I must have cut. He had come to express his sympathy. This, happening in the citadel of the *KGB*, was something new to me.

Then there was my camp in the Urals (I went through, you will notice, quite a representative sample of these institutions). We'd been brought there for complete isolation, because the ordinary camps for political prisoners had proved too leaky for the comfort of the *KGB*. Not only did we have a network of communications with the outside world, with the guards serving as messengers, but these communications were so sophisticated that I, for example, had whole tape-recorded CBS news-programmes smuggled in to me by courtesy of Alexander Ginsburg.

Well, the new camp was out in the wilderness. We had fresh and specially picked guards who proved resistant to our approaches. Not only that, but the prison régime was tightened up. We were desperate. When a prisoner's lifeline to the outside world is cut, half his life is cut too. The hardship and hopelessness began to take their toll; people began to die. The whole camp went on hunger-strike.

But then a miraculous transformation in our fortunes occurred. The guards began to talk to us. We were told that our hunger-strike was proof in their eyes that there could be no *KGB* stool-pigeons among us. (It is the standard fear of guards in the USSR that spies planted among the inmates will give them away if they show any leniency towards the prisoners.) For a stool-pigeon would not be asked and could not be persuaded to risk his life. So the guards began to cooperate. They would take messages to our friends outside, and life in the camp became bearable, as camp-life goes in the Soviet Union.

WEREN'T THESE GUARDS *just reverting to the Russian people's basic good nature?*

My father, a young conscripted lieutenant of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the First World War, spent a couple of years as a prisoner-of-war in Siberia. He used to tell me about the altogether tolerable life he and his fellow-prisoners were allowed to live in their camp near Chita. Indeed, as a child I often saw the programmes of the operettas and concerts which the prisoners-of-war mounted, the syllabus of the language courses they attended, the camp newspapers they wrote and printed, and even photographs of life in this Far Eastern Russian war prison.

In one of these my father was shown with an armed Cossack guard on each side—the picture had been duly signed by the two Cossacks. In another, enormous beer-barrels were shown in which, I was later told, Chinese ladies of less than immaculate reputation had been smuggled in (with the guards' connivance) to entertain the inmates.

My father had nothing but good words to say about the way he and the other prisoners had been treated, and especially about the common sense and humanity of the Russian private soldier—the muzhik *in uniform. In 1917 he escaped, and he got back to Hungary a few weeks before the War ended. Throughout his long and hazardous journey he was well treated by the ordinary people; they helped him with food, clothing, transportation.*

Between 1917 and 1987 many things seem to have happened to the character of the Russian people. Where have all "the good Russians" gone?

BUKOVSKY: You cannot, under Marxism-Leninism, expect the ordinary Russian to behave as his grandparents did. In your father's day, and for centuries before that, it was the most natural thing for a Russian *muzhik* to help convicts on the run. He did it as a fellow-sufferer and Christian: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Our literature is rich in examples. But when Communist ideology was injected into Russian thinking in 1917, fear and hatred were injected with it too. Helping a prisoner with so much as a piece of bread was declared to amount to complicity. The population was divided into angels (the proletariat) and devils (the class enemy), and you walked in fear of your life if anything you'd done could be interpreted as aiding "the enemy". So the ordinary Russian's reactions changed. He was desensitised and brutalised. The more significant, then, the awakening of his solidarity with the civil rights movement in recent years.

Solzhenitsyn describes in his great work how the principal problem inside the Gulags was the ordinary criminals' bitter hostility to the political convicts. That's now all gone. The moment you arrive in prison or camp as a "political" you are treated with respect. The common law criminals feel that you stand for the ordinary man's rights—that you are *their* representative, too. They would not be able to explain their feelings in these terms because they are mostly simple and inarticulate fellows, but they do understand your ability to speak for them, lay out the law and write petitions on their behalf. I spent much of my time in prison answering their questions, trying to solve their personal problems and decid-

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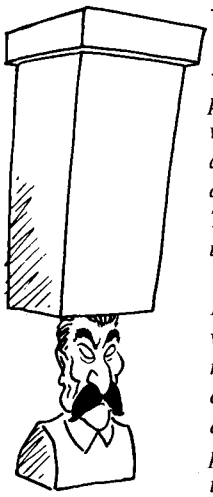
ing their disputes as a kind of umpire. Friends of mine who left Soviet prisons quite recently tell me that the same attitudes prevail today, only on a much wider scale.

We can, I think, infer from all this with reasonable certainty that our case is now well understood by the Russian people, and that if some of the fixtures were to come loose on the deck of the Soviet ship, we would have a lot of support in chucking them altogether.

2. Purging the Crimes of Stalinism?



IT'S REASSURING *to be told that some of the Russian people's collective fears are now being shed and that the popular conscience is reawakening, but when will the perpetrators come forward and say, as Pasternak did in that memorable passage about the death of Marina Tsvetaeva, "I am to blame. We are—all of us"?*

You make a profound case in "To Build a Castle" for the assumption of individual responsibility as the only means of redeeming society from collective complicity. One is surprised that in a nation traditionally preoccupied with crime and punishment no one has yet come forward to say "I've done it—please listen to my story and judge me if you must", or sentiments to that effect.

Where have all the "judges" gone—the people's assessors, the camp-guards, the torturers, the executioners, the men and women who meted out "administrative justice", the informers, the denouncers, the bearers of false witness, those tens of thousands of servants of the Cheka, GPU, NKVD, MVD *and now* KGB, *who created and ran the monstrous régime of the Gulags and starved the Ukraine into submission in the early 1930s? Why haven't scores of them escaped to the West to ease their conscience? Why was it left to Solzhenitsyn to assemble the evidence from the victims and survivors, but never, as far as I'm aware, from the men who waded deep in the blood of their own countrymen?*

There is also another and more institutional side to this Soviet version of "die unbewältigte Vergangenheit" *(as the Nazi past is known in Germany). Marxism is a profoundly historical analysis of the successive activities of men. It claims that nothing in society can be understood without going back to the forces that shaped it. I fail to see how Marxism-Leninism can, in its Soviet incarnation, hope to gain a measure of health and acceptability without subjecting the Leninist-Stalinist past to a rigorous historical analysis, naming names, punishing those responsible, and publicly rehabilitating those who have been persecuted.*

Khrushchev, with his speech at the 20th Party Congress, made a valiant beginning. He did half the job. Isn't it now up to Gorbachov to do the other half—to launch a series of "Stalin-crime trials" precisely in the name of loyalty to Marxism?

I hasten to add in all fairness that Gorbachov and his supporters have themselves recently indicated that they want to see the past re-examined and accounted for. But will they do it? **Can** *they do it? Going by your reading of Soviet psychology, it will prove an extremely hazardous undertaking. You speak in your book about the need to shatter "the internal excuses with which we justified our complicity in all the crimes". Isn't it a lot easier to change institutions than the justifications of wrongdoing in the minds of men?*

BUKOVSKY: The problem of individual responsibility is encapsulated in your quotation from Pasternak. A lot of people felt and feel the way Pasternak did but very few had the courage to say so. The system makes for silence. It proffers compliance as the lesser evil. To stand up and say: "Yes, we have known all about the executioners, the deportations. . . . Yes, we closed our eyes so that we wouldn't feel responsible", this takes an heroic person and an abnormally heightened type of consciousness. And then to be derided, to boot, for "tilting at windmills" by the very people whose rights you are trying to protect at great risk to yourself is a little too much even for a courageous man to bear. When a policeman threatens you under investigation, "Don't be a fool, toe the line", he may very well steel your resistance, but when the same is said to you by ordinary people you have known and liked all your life, your inclination is to give up in disgust.

If you want to induce Soviet people to allow their better selves to come forward and take responsibility, you have to change the entire context of their lives. You have to make it safe for them to speak the truth. Perhaps that context is now being slowly changed under Gorbachov. It's too early to say, but if so, I am certain that people will eventually come forward and do exactly what you have suggested is expected of them. Individual writers have already done so in the emigration. Men like Lev Kopelev have owned up—"There's blood on my hands", he says, in effect, in his autobiography.[3] They tell us how blindly they believed and cooperated, and how slow and painful it was for them to exorcise this self-delusion and regain a measure of self-respect.

But what you seem to be suggesting is something much wider. You would like the Soviet Union to cleanse itself through an act of collective repentance, and you're right. This is what Solzhenitsyn demands and what I also feel has to be done. Soviet society must go back to the 1930s, '40s and '50s, and dig up the crimes of the era of Stalin. We must relive Stalinism if we really want to stamp on it. If we don't do it and do it quickly, Soviet-Russian society will never be able to shed the stigma of collective complicity. There are, of course, different ways of doing it. Solzhenitsyn wants to see it done on religious grounds; my own grounds are secular —but we both want the same thing.

—But you agree, don't you, that names will have to be named, trials held, and individuals as well as entire classes of people rehabilitated?

[3] Lev Kopelev, *No Jail for Thought* (Secker & Warburg, 1977), *Education of a True Believer* (Wildwood House, 1981).

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BUKOVSKY: Naturally. This is what we all expected Khrushchev to do after he had broken the ground with his speech at the 20th Party Congress. But he didn't do it. It turned out that he used de-Stalinisation merely as a tool for establishing himself in power. He didn't go to the ideological and institutional roots of Stalinism, he didn't punish the guilty (except the men around Beria, and removing them was part of the power struggle)—and, consequently, the spectre of Stalinism has never stopped haunting the USSR. What is more, once in the saddle, Khrushchev encouraged the cult of his own person to replace that of Stalin and made himself both hated and ridiculous for it. He proved the truth of Marx's observation that things tend to happen twice in history—first as tragedy and the second time as farce.

I DO NOT share the current Western euphoria about Mikhail Gorbachov's reforms, but—talking as we are about digging up the crimes of the Soviet past—Gorbachov's people themselves are now pushing the reform movement in that direction and saying so quite openly in the teeth of opposition. Vitaly Korotich, editor of the Soviet journal "Ogonyok", had this to say to the "Christian Science Monitor" on 20 February 1987:

> **"Up to now we've been shadow-boxing over reforms. Now it's a real fight. There are real threats. Real phone calls. People call and say 'things will go back to the way they were, and then you'll shut up'. I don't think there is any alternative to what Gorbachov is doing. I know I don't want to live the old way. . . .**
>
> **The opposition came from some of the editors. Of course they didn't say 'We're against *glasnost*'. They said, 'Do we really need to touch on all the painful points in our history? Our system?' Gorbachov took the opposite line. He told the meeting, if we have real democratisation, that means that everyone can be criticised, including himself. . . . Is it necessary or not to talk about 1937? I think so. Until we resolve the question of Stalin we'll never move forward. Other people object. They say: 'Do we want to create the impression that the achievements of socialism were based on a crime?' And others—very sober people—feel that, well, Stalin may have been a bandit, but he got things done."**

BUKOVSKY: It is, of course, gratifying to see that people like Korotich, who didn't always talk the way he does now (and who knows how he may be talking tomorrow?), demand the resolution of "the question of Stalin". But I'll believe it when I see it. Khrushchev promised the same thing with much greater fanfare and in more open language, and the results were non-results.

—The point Korotich raises is an incisive one. Would the exposure of the past really repair the reputation of the Soviet system ("We had the strength to face what had been done in our name and to punish the perpetrators")? Or would it prompt the public to say: "The Soviet system was conceived and born in crime—nothing but more wickedness is likely to come out of it"?

To put it another way—would the Soviet public think of the reforming leaders: "Whatever your protestations, you're all tainted with the same brush"? Or would it rather say: "It's remarkable how, behind bureaucracy's stony façade, a great deal of doubt, dissent, and even rebellion—and some honest men—appear to have survived"?

BUKOVSKY: For the intelligent and realistic Soviet observer, all the current talk means very little unless talk results in action. The Soviet public is hard-bitten—it will advance no trust to this or any leadership. If the US and West European governments want to make advance payments to the Gorbachov team in terms of Arms Control concessions and economic aid—that is their business. But I can assure you that the Soviet public will not. Remember one thing: no government and no leader in the USSR enjoys a "presumption of innocence". The ordinary man's attitude to authority is to say: "Show me that you are *not* guilty", and that is as it has to be in the light of the Soviet past.

NEVERTHELESS, some of the pronouncements of Gorbachov's economic advisers make me think that behind their scholastic language there lurks a genuine will to break out of "the system". Tatiana Zaslavskaya, for example (whose vocabulary is, incidentally, by no means always scholastic), let it be known to a Yugoslav journalist: "The top leaders should first introduce a process of freeing people from their chains and giving them their rights. . . ."

True, she spoke these remarkable words in a socio-economic context and to a Zagreb paper, but language of this kind has a way of making the rounds, turning up in unexpected places and having unforeseen results. Mightn't sentiments so unequivocally expressed induce the Soviet people to temper some of their scepticism?

BUKOVSKY: Not at all. Soviet history has always been long on declarations of libertarian intent and short on results. "Democratisation"—"the even better enforcement of Socialist legality" (I always liked that "even")—"the exploitation of the hidden reserves of the socialist economy"—"criticism and self-criticism". . . . Why, hardly a year has passed since 1917 that slogans of this kind have not been hammered into the consciousness of the Soviet citizen.

But out of the slogans came poverty-as-before and national-imprisonment-as-before—first because Stalin was Stalin, then because Brezhnev was Brezhnev, and Chernenko was Chernenko. No one blamed the system; no one blames it today.

—There is an old Negro proverb which says: "Cheat me once—shame on you. Cheat me twice—shame on me."

BUKOVSKY: That sums it up. The Soviet people—a very patient people—will not be cheated yet again.

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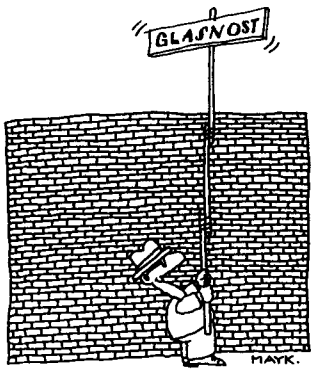
3. For a Quiet Exit of Soviet Communism



WHAT WOULD YOU want a completely enlightened Gorbachov to do? How would you define your criteria for saying whether he has, or hasn't, begun to walk down the road that leads to fundamental change in the system?

BUKOVSKY: Ah, that's a good question, because it has, or should have, an immediate relevance to Western thinking about Gorbachov's Russia. The Western public is confused—the political class is deceived or is perhaps deceiving itself in the hope that somehow or other the problem of Soviet power and the Soviet system will go away. Eventually it might, but here is what I think should be our yardstick.

First, the Soviet system has sprung from a concept. It is an ideological society. To change it you must go back to the theory. Nothing less will do or can do. Nothing in fact works in Soviet Russia unless a theoretical justification has been given or the sacred texts have been amended or repudiated. That should, ideally, mean the repudiation of Marxism as an anachronistic concept, irrelevant to our problems at the end of the 20th century.

But, for obvious reasons, we cannot expect the Soviet leadership to do that. They would be signing their death warrant. So what is it we *can* expect, and what is it the Soviet peoples should insist on?

It should be quite possible and feasible for the Gorbachov leadership to say at some point in the not too distant future that, in the post-industrial, high-technology age, the idea of "antagonistic" contradictions between "socialist" society and "capitalist" society is nonsense. This would mean repudiating the class struggle and, of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

—Can you see the Church turning its back on the Trinity, Original Sin, and the Immaculate Conception?

BUKOVSKY: No, I can't—and neither can I see the Soviet leaders turning their backs on Marx *and saying so*. But much has been done in history in the name of an idea that has, in fact, become meaningless. I would expect that a truly reforming Soviet leader would keep the sacred names and slogans going, while marching, in reality, to a very different tune. He could learn from the Chinese.

—But aren't some of Gorbachov's covert critics even within the Party leadership doing precisely the opposite—using the language of "glasnost" *and* "perestroika" *to promote pre-Gorbachov and indeed Stalinist types of ideas? V. V. Shcherbitskiy, for example gave us the following interpretation of "restructuring" at the 25th Congress of the Ukrainian* Komsomol:

"Restructuring provides conditions and calls for the rebirth of the romanticism of intense shock work. . . . Our dynamic times call for new heroes and true champions of restructuring and acceleration. We are confident that the *Komsomol* will bring forth young heroes of our times! The creation of a museum of the Stakhanovite movement would undoubtedly facilitate the moulding of such heroes."

I thought this was a fine case of "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. . . ."

BUKOVSKY: Shcherbitskiy is undoubtedly at odds with what you and I take to be Gorbachov's message. We shall see whether he will last as a member of Gorbachov's Politburo.

But coming back to the criteria by which I would measure Gorbachov's reforms, I would say, secondly, that he and his colleagues will have to level with Soviet history. The question is: how far do we expect them to go in rehabilitating the victims of the Soviet past? There are some who say that clearing the name of Bukharin would be enough—and the least difficult because some of Gorbachov's economic policies are in fact similar to those Bukharin advocated at one stage of his life. Others say: If Bukharin, why not rehabilitate the Mensheviks? Some go further still: they feel that, with the bankruptcy of Soviet collectivised agriculture increasingly exposed and the Gorbachov team's drive for "private" production making the headlines, the time has come to repudiate the collectivisation of agriculture in the 1929-32 period and the massive crimes associated with it, especially in the Ukraine.

BUT AREN'T YOU now voicing the rather exacting demands of a small, educated élite who tend to believe that no political action can be taken without philosophical justification? Doesn't the evidence of "life itself" (as the Communists are in the habit of saying) tell us a different story?

BUKOVSKY: Not at all. Marxism is an historical concept. The Soviet system is its direct and gravely sick offspring. But it, too, is constructed in such a way that you cannot change any part of it without offering an internally consistent set of ideological and historical reasons.

The third thing that I would insist would have to be changed is Soviet Law. Article 28 of the Constitution says that the Soviet Communist State supports revolutionary and national "liberation" struggles throughout the world. So long as this stipulation remains one of the governing principles of the Soviet state, the Kremlin will go on having an excuse for expansionism.

This is something the rest of the world cannot tolerate and the present Soviet leadership cannot afford, if, that is, Soviet protestations of "peace" are to have any credibility. If the Soviet leaders want peace let them show the world that they will not be going to war in the Third World or sponsor wars by proxy and subversion. Let them change the Constitution and, for example, withdraw from Afghanistan as a first step.

There is, further, Part 3 of Article 64 of the Penal Code. This states that a civilian leaving the Soviet Union without lawful authorisation commits a crime no different from mili-

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tary desertion in war. What does this mean? It means that civilian citizens of the Soviet Union are "at war" with the rest of the world—that Soviet civil society as a whole is at war with the rest of the world. How can this be made to square with Soviet peace propaganda? The Soviet Government must delete this stipulation of the Penal Code if it wants to put its relationship with the outside world—and the Soviet people—on a new footing.

Moreover: how are we to interpret the continuing existence of the International Department of the Central Committee? Surely this is the *Comintern* in disguise, and thus directly subversive of the stability of countries with which the Soviet Union says it wants to live in peace. If Gorbachov and his men mean business, they must abolish the International Department as a serious stumbling-block to peaceful cooperation with the international community.

—Would you want the Soviet leadership to end the monopoly position of the Communist Party and reintroduce a multi-party system?

BUKOVSKY: I would—but we cannot expect them to go that far; and it would not be necessary.

—Meaning that the reforms you have just sketched out would be enough to dismantle the Communist system as we know it?

BUKOVSKY: Not quite. I have made a study of the medium and long-range prospects of the Soviet system, and my reading of the future, taking into account the Gorbachov-factor, is roughly as follows. The Soviet Union is in rapid decline. The decline can be slowed down in the hope that "something will turn up" on the way, but it cannot be stopped. If radical reforms are not made, the system has about 20 years before it unravels and the empire crumbles. If Gorbachov's reforms and future reforms—including the radical ones I have just mentioned—are put in motion, then, and only then, can the Kremlin hope to buy time and postpone the day of reckoning.

—I'm a little sceptical about prognostications. Didn't Andrei Amalrik ask, in a famous tract in the 1960s, "Will the USSR Survive Until 1984?" He thought it wouldn't, but it did.

BUKOVSKY: There is always a risk attached to forecasts, but I hold these views on the best evidence I have and the best extrapolations I am capable of making.

I KEEP COMING *back to the point: can you ask the Soviet leadership to commit what amounts to suicide? Whatever Mikhail Gorbachov is, he is not stupid. He can, I am certain, see as clearly as either of us that repudiating the class struggle and opting out of the "internationalist duties" of the Communist state would totally undermine the system's title to legitimacy. Once the system is open, culturally liberal, free-market oriented, and non-expansionist in its international relations, it is only time before the public will say: "Can't we have all these things more fully, more cheaply and with a greater sense of self-respect under a properly elected democratic government? What need is there for the costly pretence of 'socialism'?"*

BUKOVSKY: I don't think the Soviet leadership has much choice in the matter. That the threat to the system is grave and the leadership realises that it is—all this we know from Gorbachov himself. He is, in effect, asking the Western world to assist him in slowing down the decay and postponing the demise of Soviet Communism. Hence his return to the zero-option without SDI strings; hence, in large part, his cultural and economic liberalisation and much else.

—Should we go along with him?

BUKOVSKY: To a limited degree—yes. What do I mean by "going along"? Gorbachov is now trying to decentralise some of the economy, conferring the responsibilities of management on individual enterprises. The West should not go along with that until and unless the reforms have begun to bite. But once restructuring is really under way, the West should contribute to the speed and particular character of decentralisation by offering to cooperate with these increasingly self-managed enterprises. It could hasten the liberalisation of the system from within.

In other words, the West should neither automatically go along with the reforms, nor automatically refuse all of Gorbachov's pleas for assistance. It should, under certain conditions, take part in the reform process on the assumption that, while Western help might indeed slow down the withering away of the Soviet system, it might nevertheless lead to a gradual dismantling of its totalitarian characteristics, and could do so without cataclysmic upheavals. This would seem to me to be the most painless way to go, and the most realistic.

—But wouldn't even qualified rescue operations of this kind (one-sided moratoria and the like) amount to bailing out the Soviet system and making it stronger? Wouldn't it, also, be ignoring the evidence of history to believe that so sophisticated a policy could be consistently pursued by a disunited West and a less than perfect American leadership?

As for economic cooperation: joint ventures with decentralised and self-managed enterprises have been tried, especially in Yugoslavia, and found wanting. Admittedly, Yugoslavia is, as a result of Western cooperation, a more pleasant and more liberal place to live in than the Soviet Union, but it is hardly a model that either the Soviet population or Western governments would make great sacrifices to emulate.

BUKOVSKY: For a system as hide-bound as the Soviet, the Yugoslav model is not to be despised *as a transition*. In any case, a beginning has to be made, and we are now in the position of seeing a semblance of a beginning being made by the Gorbachov leadership. The West's best policy is to accelerate the "acceleration", widen the "openness", and boost the "restructuring"—always bearing in mind that *its* purpose is not to help the Soviet system, but to make it disappear without drama.

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—There are, as I see it, at least two dangers in giving Gorbachov the sort of vitamin-injection-cum-pain-killer that you tentatively suggest. The first (to which we have already alluded) is the danger of making the Soviet state stronger and the Soviet empire more enduring—perhaps, as you say, in the short term, but perhaps permanently. At present the Soviet Union is a superpower in military terms only. In most other respects it's closer to being a Third World country. Mightn't your carefully timed economic assistance nevertheless make us into suppliers of the proverbial rope with which the Soviets have always said they would one day string up the suppliers?

BUKOVSKY: Well, as we are indulging now in a bit of crystal-gazing, let me be slightly speculative. I don't think that danger would arise. We are talking about retiring the Soviet system. The moment you do that, the Soviet empire goes with it. And once the Third World part of the empire is lost and the East European dependencies crumble as part of the disintegration of totalitarianism at the centre, I doubt whether the Soviet Union itself could maintain its integrity within its present borders. The Baltic states would be the first candidates for independence, followed perhaps by the Ukraine and others, mainly in Central Asia.

What you are left with, then, is the Russian Federation, which should be no threat to the world. Anyone who knows the state of Soviet industry, the backwardness of the Soviet exploitation of natural resources, the environmental and social problems the country faces, realises that it will take at least two generations for a reduced Russian state to attain a sense of normality, and very much longer to turn itself into any kind of "power". Real superpower status will be completely outside its reach.

THE SECOND DANGER *I can foresee is this. Coming to the temporary assistance of the Gorbachov team by helping them to bury themselves without a fuss would, in the short term, probably make the system look rather attractive in the eyes of Eurocommunists and even a great many American liberals and European social democrats. They would have some reason for saying: "We can now see that the Soviet system* **is** *reformable. Excise the alien element of Stalinism, and Marxism gains a fresh relevance to the condition of man at the turn of the century. . . ." Voices of that kind can already be heard on the strength of the mere promise of the Gorbachov reforms, no matter how firmly men like Igor Ligachev and Aleksandr Yakovlev go on telling us that under no circumstances will "democratisation" be allowed to lead to political pluralism, much less a multi-party system.*

Ligachev said this in Saratov on 4 March 1987:

> **"[Western critics] still cherish the hope of weakening our system from within the path of democratisation and turning it into a channel for political pluralism. These are pipe-dreams."**

Yakovlev (speaking to the Spanish press on 11 March 1987) put it even more forcefully:

> **"Sometimes we are told: 'You are now going towards liberalisation; you are going towards a Western type of democracy.' Nothing of the kind. We are moving away from it. We think and even hope that in certain respects you will have to follow our example."**

Gorbachov wants your "transitional" period to become permanent. He has pointed out time and again: the main **hope** *of the capitalist enemy is to preserve the Soviet Union in its present backward state and to increase its difficulties through foisting on it senseless military spending. The main* **fear** *of the enemy is a successfully restructured, modern, competitive and attractive Soviet system.*

I cannot fault Gorbachov's analysis. Wouldn't your shrewdly conceived tactical cooperation result in helping the Soviets to re-establish their reputation as a reformable system, reviving some of the ideological and political magnetism the Soviet model once had but mercifully lost over the last 30 odd years?

Summing up the results of G. P. Razumovskiy's visit to the 26th Congress of the Austrian Communist Party, a "Pravda" despatch observed (on 28 March 1987):

> **"It was particularly noted that the [Communist] party organisations are showing sincere interest in the restructuring which is now taking place in the Soviet Union, and this creates favourable opportunities for stepping up the activities of the Austrian Communist Party and attracting new members to its ranks."**

BUKOVSKY: I don't share your concern. We are talking about a *transition*. If my analysis is correct, there will be no time for a "social-democratic" type of USSR to put down roots and make an impact on the world. The logic of economic devolution will make for ever greater openness and *de facto* pluralism. I can foresee no stable state occurring in the gradual unravelling of the system as we have known it, and nothing for the European Left and American liberals to get too hopeful about.

4. Danegeld for the Russians

I DON'T WANT *to spoil your scenario, but I'm fairly certain that practical officials sitting in the State Department, for instance, or the British Foreign Office, would shake their heads and say that no government could build its foreign policy on so large and so speculative an historical forecast. They would refuse to accept that US or Western foreign policy should aim at dismantling the Soviet system (that, they would say, was a strictly internal matter); and they would be horrified by the suggestion that our policies should somehow assume or (perish the thought!) contribute to the disintegration of the Soviet state. Milder suggestions have sent American and European diplomats into paroxysms of indignation. President*

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Reagan and Mrs Thatcher could probably tell us a tale or two about the "déformation professionnelle" *of officials manning the State Department and the Foreign Office.*

BUKOVSKY: Well, if that were to be the State Department's reaction, then the State Department would be plainly wrong. It isn't a question of *whether* the Soviet system is on the way out, but under what circumstances and at what speed it will make its exit. Gorbachov knows this as much as you and I do.

Some years ago Dr Helmut Sonnenfeldt suggested that an "organic relationship" between the Kremlin and its client states in Eastern Europe was a desirable American objective and deplored the fact that such a relationship did not exist. This was an erroneous analysis at the time, and it would be doubly erroneous to go along with it today. If, as I am convinced, time is up for the Soviet system, then (to repeat) the only sensible thing for us to consider is how to make the Soviet decline crisis-free for the Soviet leadership. This will leave plenty for the State Department people to do. No area-specialist would have to join the dole queue.

—So what practical action do you suggest Western governments should take in the immediate future?

BUKOVSKY: So far Gorbachov and his team have only been *talking* about reforms—no real reforms have yet been instituted.

—The openness, moreover, comes from a closed circle of leaders. The freedom of discussion is decreed by fiat. Decentralisation itself is centrally directed. The "revolution" is from above, and so far well under control.

BUKOVSKY: Yes; unless we can see early and convincing signs that reforms are really happening, the West should provide fresh incentives for the *perestroika* to take off and fly. This would have to mean stepping up pressure on the Soviet empire in terms of increased military competition including, of course, SDI, and refusing to relax pressure on the USSR's Third World components as well as Eastern Europe. Western governments should be especially careful not to give massive economic assistance or offer technological cooperation at the present juncture. This would kill the reforms and jeopardise Mikhail Gorbachov's plans for a generally reorganised Soviet system.

YOUR SCENARIO assumes that Gorbachov will remain at the helm and that the cohesion of his team and their reforming zeal will remain intact for the foreseeable future. I wonder, and so do others. Galina Vishnevskaya, for example, believes that Gorbachov is cast in the mould of Khrushchev—an iconoclast and impatient reformer while fighting to establish himself in power, but a conservative once he is safely home and dry, and has spawned his own mafia.

BUKOVSKY: Gorbachov's power appears to be safe at the moment. It is true that he is facing opposition in many quarters, but this opposition is neither strong enough nor smart enough to threaten him.

What does leave the new team's power base open to doubt is the safety of the socialist empire itself, because that is endangered by the poor performance of the Soviet economy. Gorbachov is not much worried about the working man's standard of living in Voronezh, though he would clearly like to push it up. What does worry him is the inability of the Soviet system to sustain the burdens which Cuba, Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and the East-Central European states have placed on it. His empire is built on quicksand.

—Old-fashioned imperialism used to draw economic benefits from the colonies. The Soviet variety exports the command-economy to the new dependencies as part and parcel of the export of "socialism" and makes them just as bankrupt as the mother country itself. Famine in Ethiopia, the upheavals in the Yemen, food-rationing in Cuba and Nicaragua give us some measure of the effects of "socialist internationalism". Moscow's imperialism is certainly unselfish in a grotesque sense of the word. . . .

BUKOVSKY: Blind and dogmatic would be a better way to describe it—and someone has to pay the bills. The urgency behind the present reform movement comes from Gorbachov's realisation that the Soviet economy will simply not be able to carry "world socialism" on its back and compete, at the same time, with the US in the arms race. Who, then, will be footing the bills? Who, in fact is footing them now? Naturally, the hated and derided capitalist system.

The next question a reasonable man must ask is why is the West so obliging? My answer is that the Soviet Union, seeing itself as the hub of "world socialism", has been conducting, as its *raison d'être* demands, a non-shooting war against the rest of the world over the last seven decades. Since Watergate and the US débâcle in Viet Nam, Soviet expansionism and the Soviet nuclear build-up have accelerated, and after a careful weighing of "the correlation of forces" the Soviets seem to have come to the conclusion that they could now undermine the US as a world power by making trouble for it in its soft underbelly in Central America.

Through Cuba and Nicaragua they could reach Mexico, and if Mexico could be manipulated to turn itself into another Viet Nam or Nicaragua, American arms and attention would be so fully occupied on America's long southern border that NATO would become an orphan and the Soviets would come a mighty step closer to achieving the main objective of their entire post-War policy—that of detaching the US from Western Europe and becoming the dominant power on the Euro-Asian landmass. The "Finlandisation"—and worse—of Western Europe would then be a heartbeat away.

—An outflanking movement on the grand scale. . . .

BUKOVSKY: Yes. The Soviets' earlier attempt to outflank Western Europe via the oil factor and Arab unrest in the Mediterranean failed; it is now the turn of Central America and with a much better prospect of success.

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All these are, in effect, warlike actions. Western Europe and the US are under duress. The public can feel this; they can feel it but cannot deal with it. Their and their governments' reaction has been to put off the moment of truth by paying Danegeld to the Soviet Union.

Let's call a spade a spade: those American computers which have recently converted the antiquated machinery of the Romanian police-state into one of efficient oppression, and those West German steel-rolling mills which now augment Soviet military production (for example, the automated works in Lipetsk), are sophisticated bribes the West is paying to keep the Communists at bay—in addition to being lucrative business for short-sighted bankers and industrialists.

—What you're saying is that we are being "held to ransom".

BUKOVSKY: That is exactly what is happening. The Soviets are drawing a regular supplement to their budget from the Western taxpayer. He is now obliged to support not only his own country's military expenditure to protect him against the Soviet threat, but also the Soviet military budget, which makes that protection more and more difficult, and more and more expensive.

—But mightn't a hardbitten Western citizen argue that it is better to bribe the enemy and keep him quiet than to fight him? What's wrong (in an imperfect world) with appeasing a murderer if that stops him committing murder? When people like Genscher and Giscard say that we should somehow or other "help the Soviet Union", and especially assist it in making a success of its new course under Gorbachov, that is what they really mean, although they aren't in a position to phrase it quite so candidly.

BUKOVSKY: Being held to Soviet ransom is not only dishonourable but also counter-productive. You will remember Lenin's phrase about "useful idiots"—and the old Communist practice of passing the beggar's hat around when you are in difficulty, but punishing your benefactor as soon as you are out of it. The overall curve of Soviet policy since 1917 *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world shows rapid expansionism—I will not go into the details; the facts are well known. Bribes and appeasement have never stopped the Soviets from spreading their power across the world, using Marxism-Leninism as their passport, and periods of internal reform both under the Czars and under Soviet rule have been especially notorious for their expansionism.

Right now, under Gorbachov, the October Revolution is being remembered in these words on its 70th anniversary.

> **"We live in a world which has changed profoundly under the influence of our Revolution. More than one-third of mankind has already cast off the fetters of capitalist exploitation. Socialism exists, it is developing, it is growing stronger as a world system. There are no more colonial empires—there are dozens of young sovereign states.**
>
> **The forces of the international proletariat have multiplied and their interests are expressed by Marxist-Leninist communist and workers' parties. Mass, democratic, anti-imperialistic and anti-war movements are developing. The general crisis of capitalism is deepening."**
>
> **Address by the Central Committee, 14 March 1987**

Such ideas are unlikely to be put in cold storage in response to aid-and-trade by the United States or West Germany.

YOU MENTIONED "the correlation of forces"—the Soviet term for "linkage". The USSR is a totalitarian country in a state of permanent mobilisation and with a message to the world. Linkage for a state of that sort is a natural policy and one relatively easy to put into practice. Not so for the Western world. I can foresee no set of circumstances—short of a "shooting war"—under which any Western country would agree to put itself on a war footing. Nor can I foresee the West following a grand conceptual design to counter that of the Soviet Union, much less any willingness to link one issue to another or even to pursue a common economic policy. We will probably go on supplementing the Soviet military budget in the name of peace, and eliminate our own INF forces on the reasoning that the ramshackle Soviet system has ceased to be a threat.

BUKOVSKY: The ultimate cause of Western clay-footedness is twofold. First, the Western, and especially the American, inability to comprehend the conceptual character of the Soviet system and the ideological roots of Soviet policies. Second, the inability to come up with a conceptually-based policy of the West's own making, and the will to apply it consistently over a long period of time. Apart from Dr Henry Kissinger (who is intellectually a European), American politicians just do not think in conceptual terms, and have neither the sophistication nor the patience to challenge the Soviet leaders on their own ground. They could take a lesson or two from Gorbachov.

For all these reasons, my hope for a free world is not anchored in "the free world". It is anchored in the fallibility of the Soviet system, which has a fine record of having repeatedly saved the West from its own follies, and will no doubt do so again. I am just a little saddened to see that the world's most advanced nations should be so barren of ideas and deficient in will-power when offered an opportunity to take a hand in shaping the demise of Communism and the decline of the Soviet empire.

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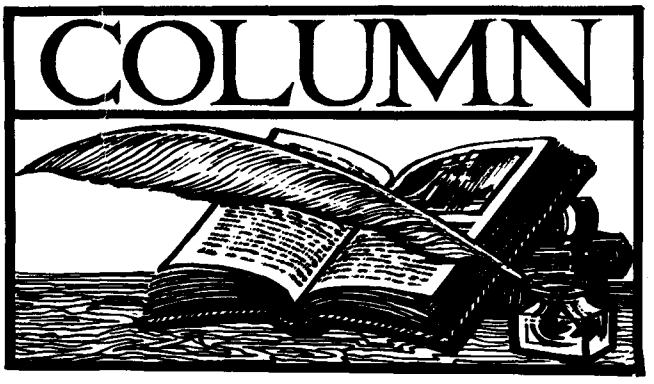

FRUSTRATION! The one diary I really needed for next year seems not to exist. Gardeners are well catered for: one gardening diary to hand has 150 pages of densely planted information, with a table of contents and an index—a pocket-sized encyclopaedia. Economists don't do badly either. The leather-bound compendium put out by their eponymous publication includes an atlas, 200 pages of statistics, a calendar of world public holidays, a Cabinet roster, and the addresses of international hotels, embassies, and High Commissions. But this of course is a desk diary, far too big for the pockets of all but marsupials.

Being no Filofaxophile, and nursing a phobia against the nonce-word "fax", I prefer something smaller and slimmer, to fit in a belt purse or preserve the set of a tuxedo. Diaries designed for motorists, businesswomen, Londoners, wine-lovers, scoutmasters and other specialised cohorts seem often as fat as those aimed at schoolchildren, cricketers, train-spotters, stamp-collectors, and cognate devotees of perpetual youth. So for years now I've made do with a sailor's diary, whose end-paper information includes mainly tide tables, rules to prevent collision, and similar esoteric data. It has the great advantages of being as thin as a ship's biscuit and showing a week to a double-page spread.

This last feature is vital. Like most of us, I lurch from week to week as if driving in switchback country. Turning the page of Saturday night is tantamount to breasting the next hill and seeing a new but limited stretch of the road ahead—just enough to cope with, given Sunday's pause. The diary, in fact, is an engagement book, listing the multiple commitments that I'd otherwise forget. Friends who have been robbed tell me that their worst losses are their diaries, followed closely by keys, address books, and I.D. papers: money, though vital abroad, comes some way down the scale.

Not since schooldays have I used a pocket diary to record the past rather than the future. I still blush at one surviving set of entries made when I was eight. "I was nearly late for school" ran the record for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday's was in block capitals: "I WAS LATE." On Friday, in small, neat, chastened letters: "*I was very early*."

Micro-dramas of this sort are, I suppose, the stock-in-trade of real diarists, for whom the page is a confessional—and occasionally a private pulpit. Pepys was the classical exemplar of the none-too-penitent; Evelyn of the intermittent preacher. Conventional wisdom argues that Pepys's private and sometimes scabrous jottings are far more interesting than Evelyn's polished prose: but I'm less certain. Itsy-bitsy paragraphs can be as tiring, after a while, as those relentless joke books beloved of juveniles and optimistic publishers—and without so many of the laughs. So, while day-to-day eye-witness notes are invaluable to historians, and create a rich sense of agitated life, measured reflections seem more rewarding for less specialist readers, especially when the diarist has a mind—or a life—more interesting than Evelyn's.

Pepys, however, not Evelyn or Boswell, figures as the leading British entrant in Rüdiger Görner's adroit little study of diarists, *Das Tagebuch*.[1] Exploring the typology of diaries, Görner draws the obvious distinction between those which comment on public affairs (Pepys, Lavater, the Goncourts, Kilvert, Sophie Scholl, Sartre, and Kazimierz Brandys) and those which represent "*die Literarisierung des Privaten*"—roughly, making literature from private life. The latter group includes Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Anaïs Nin, Gottfried Keller, Kafka, Musil, Friedrich Hebbel, Ernst Jünger, and Wilhelm Lehmann. Of all these, Goethe expressed most clearly the paradox of thus publicising privacy, as his poem "Das Tagebuch" eloquently shows. There seems a fine line, here, between the literary diary and the diary in literature—represented, among others in Görner's survey, by Ionesco, Rilke, Peter Handke, and Uwe Johnson. Nor does he exclude exponents of the commonplace book and what he calls "the diary as collage": Gerhard Hauptmann, Max Frisch, Bertolt Brecht, and Günter Grass.

But the most interesting diarists, in my view and perhaps Görner's, are those who span all categories and produce auto-psychography yet keep an eye cocked for external events. Among the examples he cites are Thomas Mann, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf—all professional writers who treasured their experience and their consciousness as raw material for literature, and at best infused their public writings with the scruple, surprise, and self-awareness that diaries can encourage.

In such cases, the motives for keeping a diary are fairly obvious, like those of a carpenter caring for his chisels. For others, as Görner suggests, the diary is a bid to still time's clock—or to compile a written photograph album to pore over in old age. Some write for themselves; some write for their contemporaries or for posterity. Many, I suspect, write to "discover" themselves, releasing inhibitions, using the page as a surrogate for the analyst's couch. There's no doubt that a diary can be therapeutic—although, like unsuccessful analysis, it can also reinforce what it seeks to exorcise. Words have astonishing and equivocal power.

WHICH BRINGS ME BACK to the diary I should have liked for Christmas. Not *The Columnist's Diary* (100 whimsical essay subjects; Unfamiliar Quotations; Aphorist's Who's Who). Not *The Cinemaniac's Diary* (Private Lives of the Second-Unit Directors). Not *The Broadcaster's Diary* (Dictionary of Gullible Producers; Ideas for Concert Interval Talks). Not even *The Eurocrat's Diary* (Map of the Milk Lake District; Safety Equipment for the Butter Mountaineer). No. What I

[1] *Das Tagebuch*. By RÜDIGER GÖRNER. Artemis Verlag.

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should seriously welcome is *The Literary Editor's Diary*. Given the data required, it would no doubt have to be a desk diary, with loose-leaf inserts at either end.

First among them might be a list of publishers with *firm* dates and prices for their forthcoming attractions, followed closely by a gazetteer of reviewers guaranteed to produce legible copy to length and on time. (Perhaps it could be a slimline diary after all.) No less useful would be a set of standard letters to would-be contributors. Some of these might contain general precepts: spell our names right, enclose a stamped/addressed envelope, type in double spacing on one side of the paper only, read the magazine. . . . Others would offer kindly turns of phrase for negative judgments: "*not quite our type of material*"—"*too rich, perhaps, for a mere short story*"—"*almost over-impeccable prosody*"—"*when you have taken GCSE. . . .*" And a final section of Tips for Editors would have to include suggestions on how to deal fairly and helpfully with the ever-increasing inflow of books intended for review.

THIS IS A PROBLEM afflicting all the media of mass communication. When the literate public was small, and print faced no great competition from screen or loudspeaker, supply and demand in the book trade were better matched. Today, the market is far larger, but production immeasurably greater; and the majority of general readers (as distinct from those seeking cookbooks, guides, and manuals) can no longer be seen as a fairly homogeneous élite. Virginia Woolf's "common reader" may always have been no more than a useful fiction, like the square root of minus one. Today, the concept is still more problematical. There is no public: there are only publics. Many overlap, but in different areas of interest; and publishers, editors, reviewers—the intermediaries between writer and reader—face a new and rather baffling job.

Broadcasters, in this context, should theoretically have both responsibilities and advantages. Sound radio can bring words imperceptibly into the skull. *Listen with Mother* and *Story Time*—both titles of BBC programmes—show the direct link back to nursery narrative. Radio discussion is equally privileged: with no faces or body-language to distract attention, voices and thoughts can communicate undisturbed. And television—although, as the much-quoted child put it, the pictures are less good than on radio—reaches so many so forcefully that it should be supremely equipped to—well, carry the word.

Yet, in Britain at least, broadcasting about books has never quite lived up to its potential. I myself have chaired, and contributed to, countless programmes of varying format in which the arts and literature come under review. Sometimes, five or six people sit round a table and discuss the subjects cold. Sometimes, there are recorded inserts—readings, music, commentary, interviews. Sometimes, the show itself is recorded, to be broadcast later; sometimes—more hazardously, but with added edge—it goes out live. In one television pilot I took part in, there appeared to be inserts within inserts: the possible variations seem infinite. But, every time, the programme seems less searching than a well-written book review in a serious journal; and the audience, for radio and television alike, remains comparatively small.

THEY ORDER, as Sterne said, this matter better in France. There, for exactly 13 years, every Friday night on the second television channel, *Antenne 2*, peak viewing time has been devoted to the discussion of books. At 9.30 prompt, after the usual advertising slot, *Apostrophes* takes the air. In a sketchy décor of books on shelves, with a small and silent invited audience behind him, and his guests arrayed on either side, Bernard Pivot introduces his weekly programme with the ritual salutation "*Bonsoir à tous!*" Plump, dark-haired, with bright quizzical eyes behind half-moon spectacles, he looks both mischievous and reassuring, like a gleeful pastrycook or a very alert owl. Then, for an hour and a quarter or more, live, with no inserts beyond the device which zooms in the relevant dust-jackets, Pivot persuades his guests to present their books, disclose their feelings, defend themselves against unsparing scrutiny, and debate the theme which that evening's offerings have in common. "Talking heads" is no doubt how British or American professionals would describe the programme, thinking to belittle it. In France, its audience is over three million, and has on occasion shot as high as five million. I personally find it a fascinating show.

Many of its addicts—and enemies—have tried to analyse the reasons for its success. In Britain, some see the French as essentially bookish people; but while this may be true of Paris, *Apostrophes* is popular all over France. There, most people will claim that "*les Français lisent peu*". They read much more when a book has appeared on the programme: booksellers regularly display the *Apostrophes* volumes on a separate table each week. Pivot's show has created many best-sellers; and although both its popularity and its selling-power are said to have declined slightly in the last three years, it still wields enough influence to make some Parisian intellectuals suspicious of what a book published last October calls "*The Pivot Effect*".[2]

ITS AUTHOR, Edouard Brasey, is a youngish journalist with a political science degree. True to his academic training, he has analysed very carefully the sales figures for books featured on *Apostrophes*, and he shows conclusively how powerful the programme is. Similarly, he has logged the number of times particular publishing houses or authors have been favoured: the top scorers, respectively, are Gallimard and Max Gallo. Of the themes treated, literature is naturally the most frequent, followed by history and politics. And because Pivot is also "*le roi Lire*"—co-founder and still a pillar of *Lire* magazine—Brasey has examined its advertising revenue, to find no correlation at all between publishers' expenditure there and their appearance on *Apostrophes*.

[2] *L'effet Pivot*. By EDOUARD BRASEY. Éditions Ramsay, FF99.

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This is entirely as it should be. Nor is it surprising. Wearing his reporter's hat, Brasey has investigated very thoroughly Pivot's background, career, and character. A child of the Beaujolais, he enjoys wine and food and football and jokes. As a young man, he wrote one novel: apposite and attractive quotations from it bestrew Brasey's text. Then journalism beckoned. Booksy news items in *Le Figaro Littéraire*; a gastronomic column; McLuhanish or Orwellian analysis of advertisements; humorous comments; editorship; an essay berating literary critics; television appearances on earlier shows. Each time, Pivot claims, luck has pushed him along: he's always been offered jobs, but never sought them. Altogether, he seems *bon-enfant*, a cheerful all-rounder with an inexhaustible appetite for reading.

He needs it. On *Apostrophes*, he's producer as well as presenter, with no massed phalanx of researchers, but merely two assistants. Each week, eagerly unwrapping the book parcels at home, he makes his own selection, chooses his theme, and invites his guests. Few have ever refused him. Of 42 leading French intellectuals listed by *Lire* in 1981, only 14 have never appeared on the programme, and only a very few have turned Pivot down: they include such notable recluses as Samuel Beckett, E. M. Cioran, René Char, and Henri Michaux.

Some—not all crying sour grapes—have accused the programme of superficiality. True, it tends to cover subjects and explore personalities, rather than evaluating texts. But there have been occasions when *Apostrophes* has done precisely the work of an investigative book review. One such, recalled by Brasey, was in May 1983, when Maria Antonietta Macciochi, a prolific apologist for Mao's "Cultural Revolution", was utterly demolished—on live television—by the indignant Sinologist Simon Leys. Pivot himself can probe with a pertinacity that belies his innocent appearance, persuading one author to admit that her novel was autobiographical and another that he employed ghost-writers.

All this is possible, and uncensored, just because *Apostrophes* goes out live. There is another advantage too. Pivot notes, as many have, that when technicians are working live, they are on their mettle; and so are the technicians of the word. Speaking to an audience is quite different from speaking to a tape-recorder.

And yet, as Pivot confesses, "After every broadcast, I feel frustrated. It never works out as I should have liked." Some of the guests share his feelings: one of them, Maurice Clavel, wrote another book simply to be invited back. Listeners too experience frustration: it was all too short. But, adds Pivot, "How do they deal with it? By buying one or more of the books." So frustration, with which we began, if you remember, is in Pivot's view the secret of his programme. Like the diary, it's certainly central to the literary life.

M

Brother

You were dead in the womb. They had to cut you loose:
like some diver trapped in a wreck
you lay helpless, tethered to death
by the cord. We hated you for that.

The flowers in a jar
by Mother's bed:
narcissi and hazel twigs.
A kind of sign.

I remember a dream I had about that time:
the milk in my glass transformed to blood
and still I drank it,
thirsting in your place.

You grew beside me steadily,
your mass and volume echoed in my own.
At night you lay against me in a thick
gossamer of cries.

And once I heard your name.
I always thought you had preceded me;
like any aboriginal, you played
hide-and-seek with souls.

My only magic, sharp and hard
like a bone in my locked throat,
I waited for you to catch me unawares,
to step into my shoes and walk away.

John Cameron Burnside

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Anna Adams

Soho Songs

1

The sun that shone down Brewer Street
  silvered the falling threads
of tinsel rain that sprinkled wet
  on shop-blinds and bowed heads,

while over-arching Brewer Street,
  above its shady chasm,
a flyover of coloured light
  was conjured through the prism

of sunlit rain wrung from the mops
  that polished the blue sky.
In doorways, business men and cops
  gave rainbow girls the eye.

2

Pretty botanic genitals
for sale: come buy, come buy
plants' evanescent public parts
dressed up in split, inviting skirts
and frilly lingerie.

Come buy, come buy of me.

Ravish my secret crimson rose,
my pink, pubescent buds:
tear off my petals and green leaves
if that will gladden your sad lives
in temporary beds.

Come buy of me my nectar-sweet
Lilies of Peter Street.

3

The wide grey street of sky
  above dark Berwick Street
is flooded with mauve dye
  as windows fill with light
  that spills into the puddles underfoot

where the inverted signs
  of topless-hostess bars
and pornfests on wide screens
  or body videos
  shiver like promises, to broken stars.

Deep in the gilded pools
  of shady Walker's Court,
light undulates, suggesting to the male
  that bodies can be bought
and everything you wish is for sale.

4

In Soho was a well
where citizens drank deep
  of cholera, of cholera;
then Soho's well was sealed
but tainted waters seep
into the well that irrigates the world.
  Tirarala.

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In Soho is a well
where citizens drink deep;
  tirarala, tirarala.
The well of life is sold
and silted up with Gold
and Silver currencies which choke the world.
  Tirarala.

5

What has become of Rose?
She came to town with neither *A*s or *O*s
to sell her assets fresh: solicitin'.

With bloodied apron, like a randy ram
reddled to mark the ewes, the butcher stands
by his refrigerated marble slab
and offers chopped-up bodies, flesh
of innocents, small shoulders, legs of lamb,
cutlets of newborn babe, bled white
and skilfully disjointed. Small pink piglets'
high-heeled trotters patter home no more
along the midnight gutters. Tasty giblets,
chicken-skinned white thighs and tender calves,
spare ribs, plump rumps, trays of small testicles
in breadcrumbs, and mature sheep's rolling eyes.
Eviscerated torsos swing from hooks
in Bluebeard's cold-store, and along these racks
hang well-dressed game birds, elegant, unruffled
but bleeding from the beak, and fluffy rabbits
stretched, with their running noses rammed in buckets.
Dismembered chicks—legs, wings and breasts—
are strewn like bombers' victims. Broken hearts
and thoughtless brains: meat pies and sausages;
and no one knows what's in them, no one knows
what has become of Rose
who came to town with neither *A*s or *O*s,
solicitin'.

6

A rainbow sprang from Leicester Square
  to bridge the web of streets
which are forbidden to angelic orders;
Follow my stripes, it said, Ride through the air
  by yellow, red or blue, arrive dry-shod
  in Bloomsbury, where you may walk with God
in robes with spotless borders.

Great Windmill Street will soil your feet
  and Berwick Market's paved with cabbage leaves,
while Walker's Court wakes carnal thought
  and leads to Rupert Street that's full of thieves.
Broadwick, Duck Lane, or Beak Street,
Old Compton Street or Greek Street
  are all unfit for angels and their wives.

But angels like to walk the streets
  and stand outside the bars
with painted faces, or, with folded wings,
  they dodge between the barrows and the cars
to meet Humanity, though we are blind
to hues beyond the ultra-violet band
  which William Blake saw bright as midnight stars.

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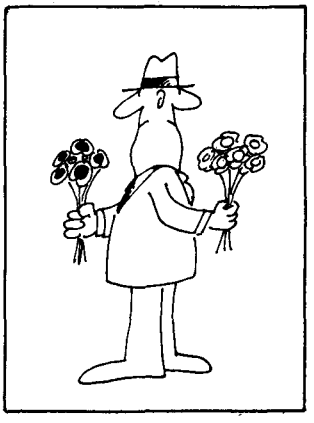
NOTES & TOPICS

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

Mitterrand's "Philosopher's Stone"



SINCE RETURNING to opposition in 1986, the French Socialists have had the best possible scope for their main accomplishment: propaganda. The Right, on the other hand, which once boasted adepts of the art, seems to have lost the knack. Even when it achieves something, the Socialists at once persuade people that it has failed.

Take, for example, their handling of the referendum in New Caledonia (13 September 1987). If any single event gave the lie to their analysis of the situation there, it was the vote in the referendum. The fact that 59% of the electorate took part in it spelled defeat for the "National Liberation Front" and its instructions to abstain. Even more would probably have voted if many Melanesians had not been afraid of reprisals. Yet in less than 24 hours the French Socialists managed to disguise, or even destroy, the effect of this rebuff to their ideas and to their protégé Jean-Marie Tjibaou. As early as Sunday afternoon, Pierre Bérégovoy, Louis Mermaz, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Lionel Jospin and Pierre Joxe began repeating *ad nauseam* that "the referendum left the problem unsolved". And what did the Conservative majority say? Nothing—although it had a powerful case. While President Mitterrand carefully avoided the risk of denying what was obvious, he contrived to have his lieutenants wipe out the Government's advantage within two days. The Socialists simply employed the good old *gauchiste* tactics of suggestion instead of reasoning, repetition instead of argument, allegation instead of proof.

In a rational debate, it would have been easy to show that from the start the Socialists were projecting on the present some ready-made ideas—comparing the Caledonian problem, that is, with the Algerian war. The comparison will simply not do. In the first place, the population is very different. Instead of one European for every nine Algerians, Caledonia has a mixture of Europeans, Melanesians, Polynesians, and Asians, none of them outnumbering the rest. Do the Socialists propose to give the Melanesian minority (many of them of mixed descent) an ascendancy based on notions of racial "purity" which they condemn in France? Do they plan to expel or disenfranchise all immigrants and their descendants—i.e. 60% of the population? In other words, is Le Pen mistaken in France but right in New Caledonia?

Nor should we forget Soviet pressure in the South Pacific. If New Caledonia were to cut all links with France and become a semi-satellite of the Soviet Union, like its neighbours Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides, independent since 1979) or the Kiribati Islands (also independent since 1979), it would relapse into a situation far more "colonial" than autonomy linked with France. Finally, we cannot ignore the lessons of 30 years' history in a number of newly independent countries, where dictatorship and famine have gone hand in hand.

And by what right should power pass to a new élite led by Jean-Marie Tjibaou? Judging from the referendum, he has the support of about half the Melanesians—that is, of some 20% of the island's population. Is he to become a new Sekou Touré—or a new Ratsiraka—simply because he is a man of the Left, a Socialist? The French Socialist Party declares itself "in line with the logic of decolonisation". That phrase is too vague to be valid. The tragedies that have taken place in Africa since 1960 are a vivid demonstration that decolonisation is worthless without democracy.

Such are some of the arguments with which the Conservative majority could have rebutted the Socialists. None of them is impregnable; each could be debated. But all of them, it seems to me, carry weight; and yet not one has been put forward. Why? To understand the reasons, let us look at the case of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

WHEN, IN 1986, the Socialists adopted proportional representation, their main aim was not to bring the *Front national* into the National Assembly. Above all, they wanted to minimise their own defeat. But the election of Le Pen's supporters was a minor benefit of proportional voting. The supreme feat of the Socialists, in fact, was to use the resurgence of the extreme Right, which had begun under a Left-wing government, as a means of destroying France's liberals.

It would have been thought dishonest and in bad taste for any liberal to accuse the Socialists of condoning the Katyn massacre, genocide in Cambodia, or the extermination of Afghan children, simply because they voted with the Communists in some local election. But any liberal who makes a local pact with Le Pen's party in a municipal council at once becomes a supporter of Klaus Barbie, a persecutor of the Jews, an accomplice of the Nazis and a war-time collaborator. . . . Don't misunderstand me. I am not defending pacts with the *Front national* by any kind of analogy with Communist fellow-travelling—I am applying to fellow-travellers their own condemnation of fellow-travelling with the National Front.

Propaganda begins as soon as the quest for truth is eclipsed by concern for effect. The Left in France has one continual obsession—trying to prove that the Right is monolithic, that

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there is no difference between French liberalism and Fascism. That is why the Socialists see Le Pen and his group as a gift from heaven, giving them the excuse to decry collusion between the Conservative majority and the *Front national*. True, the liberals can be accused of making some local alliances with Le Pen; but they have always repudiated any such alliance on a national scale; yet, in the face of Left-wing accusations, they seem to feel that their hands are tied.

The question that ought to be asked is this. Why did a tenth of the French electorate vote for Le Pen—and why were they preparing to do so while the Socialists were in power? Among the Conservative majority, only Charles Pasqua seems to have tried to analyse the reasons (in the TV programme *Club de la presse*).

Opinion polls show that Le Pen draws his support more and more from modest, average electors—workers, employees, and young people—and in a larger proportion than do the other parties. In 1987, only 12% of *Front national* supporters came from liberal, Right-wing parties. Le Pen's adherents (as Jérôme Jaffré wrote in *Le Monde* on 26 May 1987) are no longer to be likened to the *droite classique,* the traditional Right—as many of them backed Mitterrand in 1981 as voted for Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. As was shown by a survey in *Le Point* (20 July), the drift of votes from the Left to the extreme Right has become familiar. So it may be legitimate to trace the phenomenon to its source, and to ask the leaders of the Left: What have you done to some two million of your former supporters to turn them into fascists?

If the Liberals are afraid to ask so polemical a question—no more so, admittedly, than the Socialist propaganda—the reason is that they themselves feel very vulnerable. Last spring, the self-accusations of Michel Noir showed how deeply some liberals had made their own a sense of guilt which they ought at least to oblige the Left to share.

THEY HAVE REACTED no less oddly to the current theme of "decline". At its worst, propaganda consists of triumphant lies. In its democratically acceptable form, especially in an election campaign, it naturally enough involves extolling oneself and execrating others, vaunting one's own achievements and vilifying those of one's opponents. And, no sooner had the subject of "economic decline" begun to be generally broached (with all manner of "*Enquêtes sur le déclin de la France*") than the conservative majority was up in arms, indignant that so horrific a word should be used. Did you ever see a political party fly so generously to the aid of those who seek to oust it from power?

The downplaying of the Dalle Report on employment (last June) was an instance of similar folly. In the first place, France's decline is undeniable, not just a matter of opinion; the figures are there to prove it. And secondly, while its origins date back to 1973-74, its emergence, development, and acceleration all essentially occurred under Socialist rule. So, by strenuously denying that any decline had taken place, Jacques Chirac and Edouard Balladur looked like ardent apologists for Mitterrand's Socialism and his flawed economic policy.

I have looked in vain, in the political speeches of our French leaders in 1981 and 1982, for any eloquent appeal by François Mitterrand or Pierre Mauroy in favour of their predecessors' achievements. Moreover, by denying the fact of France's decline—no doubt to keep French spirits up, Jacques Chirac not only forfeits a powerful electoral argument, but actually hands it to his opponents. By claiming that at the beginning of 1986 the French economy was in no worse state than those of its competitors, he takes the blame for everything that has gone wrong since then. What moving humility! What pitiful propaganda!

Liberal inhibitions in the face of the Left's intimidation are partly a result of "*cohabitation*" between a Socialist President and a Conservative Prime Minister. But it affects the liberals more than François Mitterrand. He has never scrupled to attack the Government, still less to let his friends attack it. If constitutional respect requires that Ministers abstain from personal criticism of the *chef de l'Etat*, no such self-censorship need restrain liberals who are not Ministers. And in the choice and use of polemical arguments, they are as feeble as they are maladroit. My conclusion is that their real weakness lies deeper: in the fact that liberalism has no ideology. Socialism, by contrast, prides itself on being a supremely organising system; and even when the system is abandoned, its spirit lives on. Ideologists have one great asset (even when they grow disillusioned), they are always convinced that they are right. That is why they make the best propagandists.

MITTERRAND ILLUSTRATED THIS in his recent statement to *Le Point* (21 September 1987). Questioned about the Government purge of the mass media in 1981, he answered by citing the witch-hunt of 1974, *la chasse aux sorcières*, which was real enough—and then the far more moderate changes brought about in 1986. He conveniently omitted the large-scale Socialist and Communist colonisation of the media in 1981. He left out the "packing" of the broadcasting *Haute Autorité*, and the "parachuting" of his own man (Jean-Claude Héberlé) to the chairmanship of *Antenne 2*. He also ignored the stealthy coup by which he himself set up France's fifth channel—a gift to his *capitalistes amis*.

To be a good propagandist, one must believe totally that one is right, even when wrong, and that one's opponents are wrong, even when they are right. Better still: one must convince them as well.

Jacques Chirac was again on the defensive (at the recent *RPR* rally in Bordeaux) when he declared that he "*conservait toute son estime*" for his Finance Minister, accused by the Socialists of having distributed privatised companies to his friends. When one "maintains one's esteem" for someone, one implicitly admits that there is a bit of a problem. The attack on the Government's "hard core" has undoubtedly upset it—and given the Socialists hope. When I see "the two hundred families" and "the wall of money" re-emerge on the flood of eloquence from Pierre Bérégovoy (Minister of Finance under Laurent Fabius), I am as thrilled as if the Titanic were suddenly to surface in all its unsinkable glory.

So, since the beginning of 1986, the Socialists have done

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sterling work in recapturing public esteem. Their success as propaganda artists is absolute. Unfortunately for them, it carries a proviso: not being in power. As soon as they form a government, the magic spell is broken, and catastrophe follows.

From the beginning of 1982, they began to lose every election. From that summer onwards, François Mitterrand began slowly to sink in the opinion polls; eventually, he became the most unpopular of all Fifth Republic Presidents. Then, in the spring of 1986, his star began to rise again—he became the most popular of all! True, "*cohabitation*" gave him a unique advantage—being simultaneously in power and in opposition. Has he any reason to give up this philosopher's stone? It is indeed a *pierre philosophale* which solves all the problems of the Left in France.

Bloom's "Ethnocentrism"

"LE DÉCLIN *de la culyitr générale*", the subtitle of Allan Bloom's vigorously seditious essay, would have made a clearer if less resounding title.[1] He deals with American trials and troubles, but the transatlantic reader of *L'âme désarmée* (*The Closing of the American Mind*) soon becomes aware that most of what the author says also applies to Europe. I say the book deals with culture; to be more precise, the author is thinking here about "education". But it is a mistake to believe—this is one of our modern preconceptions that Bloom takes to task—that vague "cultural activities" offered by self-styled specialists in "social communication" ("culture-peddlers" Bloom calls them) can take the place of culture if the education that ought to constitute their base has disintegrated. That kind of culture—all appearances and "demonstrations"—is principally a public-relations exercise, whether it serves municipal, ministerial, professional, or presidential ends. Saul Bellow (in the preface to the US edition of Bloom's book) refers to "the flimsiness, and not infrequently, the trashiness, of our modern talk about 'values' . . .", and to "the disheartening expansion of trained ignorance and bad thought".

When Rabelais had the feeling that the culture he had received in his youth amounted to no more than a hollow rigmarole, it didn't occur to him to suggest organising a conference (open to the general public at discount rates) to pontificate on "*la crise d'identité culturelle*". He drew up a new education programme—at first glance excessively and unrealistically ambitious in terms of the pressure of work it created; but the whole secret of it was that in future people were to learn something rather than not learning anything.

Western culture is first and foremost an acquired capacity for personal evaluation, which education helps to shape by means of disciplines that are continually being recast but are never absent—and never easy to practise. To be effective, moreover, such disciplines must rest on recognised criteria of truth, on a body of accepted (if not immutable) values and, above all, on shared judgments concerning the society in which we live.

The development that Allan Bloom (a distinguished teacher and scholar at the University of Chicago) sees as having taken place among American students and in the American academic world in general over the past twenty years has placed at the centre of the philosophical, political, and moral conceptions of that world the idea that the cardinal intellectual sin is "ethnocentricism"—in other words, the illusion of superiority that would lead us to regard our civilisation as being "better than others".

It is the one preconception that all civilisations throughout history have cultivated about themselves, and that most of them retain without any qualms whatever. Claude Lévi-Strauss noted that there is no human group—no matter how tiny, wretched, and primitive—that does not see itself as the supreme incarnation of the human species and look down its nose at the rest of the human race.

Herodotus tells how the Persians regarded themselves as the most perfect specimens of humanity. After them came the inhabitants of the lands that bordered on Persia; then, a little farther down the path to animality, came the inhabitants of bordering lands, and so on. In short, the Persians thought of people as more or less barbarous in proportion to their geographical remoteness. (They are not so different today, as a matter of fact.)

IT WAS NOT until the advent of Greek civilisation, followed by that of Rome and then of modern Europe, that an element of cultural modesty emerged, a self-critical viewpoint conceived at the heart of the culture itself. Montaigne, for example (and, of course, to an even greater extent Montesquieu) developed the theme of *la relativité des valeurs culturelles*. We have no right, they said, to deem a particular custom inferior to our own simply because it is different. We must develop the ability to judge our own customs as if we were observing them from outside.

However, neither in Plato and Aristotle nor in the philosophers of the Enlightenment (of which the founding fathers of America were a part) does this relativist principle mean that all customs are of equal value. It means that they must all—including our own—be judged impartially in the light of reason. We ought not, say the philosophers, to be more indulgent towards ourselves than others, but nor should we be more indulgent to others than we would be to ourselves.

The original achievement of Western culture is to have set up a tribunal of human values, human rights, and the criteria

[1] *L'âme désarmée: le déclin de la culture générale*. By ALLAN BLOOM. Translated by PAUL ALEXANDER. Julliard. *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. By ALLAN BLOOM. Foreword by SAUL BELLOW. Simon & Schuster, $18.95, £14.95.

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of rationality before which all civilisations ought to appear on equal terms. This is not to pronounce all civilisations of equal value—which would be tantamount to believing in no values at all: ". . . the fact that there have been different opinions about good and bad in different times and places in no way proves that none is true or superior to others. . . ." Bloom tells us, however, that in American universities (and I believe his observation applies to Europe as well) a very different idea has recently come into prominence among both students and academics: namely, that we should not allow ourselves to judge, and even less to condemn, any civilisation—except our own.

> "Openness used to be the virtue that permitted us to seek the good by using reason. It now means accepting everything and denying reason's power. The unrestrained and thoughtless pursuit of openness, without recognising the inherent political, social, or cultural problem of openness as the goal of nature, has rendered openness meaningless. . . . Openness to closedness is what we teach."

To illustrate his point, Bloom sets students the following problem of practical morality:

> "If you had been a British administrative officer in India, would you have let the natives under your governance burn the widow alive at the funeral of a man who had died?"

The answer is either silence, or the response:

> "The British should never have been there in the first place. . . ."

No doubt that is quite true, but it does not answer the question. Above all, it suggests a willingness to go to any lengths in order to avoid having to condemn a non-Western custom. Openness to closedness.

"There is equality in the republic of cultures", Bloom further observes. "Unfortunately the West is defined by its need for justification of its ways or values, by its need for discovery of nature, by its need for philosophy and science. This is its cultural imperative. Deprived of that, it will collapse." Since vigilance with regard to Western civilisation is unabated, and since this civilisation is still fair game for every virtuous spirit, the result is that the West alone receives the barbs of our and others' criticisms.

THUS THE only crime considered to be beyond the pale nowadays is "racism". And so it should be—on condition that we do not draw the corollary that a crime ceases to be serious when committed between members of the same racial community. Why should it be considered morally right to shoot homosexuals when it happens in Iran, or to exterminate blacks when it is Robert Mugabe doing it? When Montaigne castigated the crimes of Europeans during the conquest of the New World, he did so in the name of a universal morality from which in his eyes the Indians were not exempt.

Our civilisation invented the art of self-criticism in the name of a body of principles that hold good for all men, and to which all civilisations ought therefore to be answerable on genuinely equal terms. It forfeits its *raison d'être* if it abandons that point of view. Herodotus's Persians believed the whole world was wrong—except them. We Westerners are nowadays not far short of thinking that everyone is right—except us. It is always desirable to nurture *l'esprit critique*; but isn't that to jettison it entirely?

Clippings in My Pocket

By Roy Kerridge

I HAVE JUST RETURNED from America, and what a strange country that was! Light-switches flicked upwards for light, downwards for dark. Bedside lamp-switches did not press inwards, but had to be twisted round. Pillows were always laid on top of both sheets, never between them. Wash-basins and baths had no plugs, just as in Russia. Unlike Russia, however, plug-holes could be sealed by pressing on a lever placed between the taps. (Or do I mean faucets?)

Outside in the street, daily papers were dispensed not from shops but from vending-machines. Navy blue, and placed at street-corners, these newspaper machines resembled the small ineffectual-looking American apologies for pillar-boxes. Once extricated from the machines, the papers proved unreadable—nothing but American politics and boring politicians with unfamiliar names.

The only readable paper in America, as far as I could see, was a weekly newspaper called *The Sun*. Although this paper outwardly resembles our own beloved *Sun*, they are not linked, the American *Sun* having offices in New York and Montreal.

When I first picked up a copy of the American *Sun*, I could hardly believe my eyes. Strange, outlandish headlines leaped out at me:

I WENT TO HEAVEN, MET ELVIS,
AND TOOK HIS PHOTO AS PROOF

WEREWOLF KILLS, EATS THREE WINOS
IN SEWERS OF NEW YORK CITY

MEDICAL WORLD STUNNED AS WOMAN
GIVES BIRTH TO A BLACK SHEEP

WOMAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING BECOMES HUMAN TELEPHONE

WHY SINGLE MEN ARE HAPPIER THAN MOST HUSBANDS

(that one's not quite so far-fetched). Was a new sort of journalism at work here? The American *Sun* apparently owed its success to the fact that most of its "news" was a load of made-up lies. Perhaps it was aimed at the newly literate, who may

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believe everything they read. If so, they must be mightily entertained by the American *Sun*, if not sent off their heads entirely. The "PERSONAL" columns contain page after page of adverts for Voodoo Doctors, apparently able both to curse and to bless. Many American *Sun* stories were set in Austria—possibly because the average reader would not know where that country was, once he had discovered that it was not Australia.

Here are some of my choice excerpts from the American *Sun*:

TOWN TERRORISED BY GIANT DUCK

"The four-year-old duck, called Lucy by scientists, was part of an experiment to gauge the growth rate of animals fed exclusively on hormones and steroids. . . . 'Unfortunately, the chemical build-up in her system drove her wild' says Dr Cyrus Weiscott of Austria. 'By the time she was stopped, the small town was almost destroyed', he admits. Lucy pushed open the steel bars on her cage . . . the scene turned into horror when one elderly man died on the spot of fright. 'The old man was minding his own business on a park bench feeding ducks', says a police official. 'Lucy walked up behind him and snatched a bag of popcorn from his hands with her beak. When he saw the giant duck, he dropped dead.'"

The man who went to Heaven and saw Elvis merely did so in a dream. On arrival in Heaven, he noticed Elvis walking over the clouds towards him, bathed in celestial light and smiling gently. The deceased singer handed the dreaming man a camera and asked him to take a snapshot. In his dream, the man took a picture. He then woke up. When he had developed the film in his real-life camera, a picture of Elvis in Heaven appeared. Had it *really* been a dream? A reproduction of the picture showed a cut-out of Elvis superimposed over a scene of clouds. At one time, such an American dreamer would have met not Elvis but Jesus. These are decadent days for dreamers.

Now for the New York werewolf.

"It is a human wolf with razor-sharp teeth and claws", a New York sewage worker allegedly told the *Sun*:

"One man who lives on the streets says the creature crawled through a manhole cover and grabbed his friend as they walked along a deserted street looking for a dry place to sleep. 'The creature's huge hands dragged my friend inside', he says. 'I didn't report it to the police because no one cares about the homeless here', he adds."

TELEPHONE BELLS, AUDIBLE TO OTHERS, kept ringing in a woman's head, since she was struck by lightning. Whenever she opened her mouth a caller's voice emerged. Friends could speak directly to the people on the other end of the mouthline by shouting into the woman's throat. Fortunately for the victim, she could ring off by clicking her jaw.

The woman who gave birth to a black lamb, somewhere in Australia, did so because of a sperm bank mix-up. Several miles away, a sheep gave birth to a human baby, but the young couple made no swap and brought up the lamb as their own child.

"The father takes great pride in holding it, and he helps to feed it", the report ended.

BIZARRE DISEASE MAKES WOMAN EAT SINK

"Maura Einhorn of Austria suffers from a rare disease called pica. 'She took a mallet to the sink, crushed it into a thick powder and ate it with a spoon', says Maura's brother Mark."

The afflicted girl also ate the television, her shoes and the furniture, and hasn't stopped eating yet. Her family are standing by her, no doubt ready to run at the first sign of a hungry gleam in her eyes.

BLOW ON THE HEAD TURNS MAN INTO A WOMAN

screamed yet another caption, but I had read enough. The American *Sun*, I decided, was not a great work of literature, despite the amount of imagination that went into it. Taken in small doses, it makes an entertaining read. What if English papers were to be filled with any old rubbish that came into the editor's head?

Wait a minute—perhaps they are!

Airborne

I wouldn't wish to fly like a duck—
that photo-finish thrust of the neck,
tense panicky wing-beat.

Nor like a wren. Too furtive and timid.
Altitude-wise the hedge-top's his limit,
so write him off as a feathered mouse.

The chaffinch, perhaps, lacing horizons with scallops.
But not starlings. They smudge the sky in flocks,
buffoons and far too gregarious.

Nor loners at dusk, heavy-winged crows
who have scavenged the banks of Styx and flap across
sunsets, wastes of crimson menace.

Gulls may redeem their yellow raucous
beaks, riding thermals with a dancer's
grace. I treasure such thrills.

But acing them all is the lark. His miraculous
lift-off. His dawn-shots through haze.
His Indian rope-trick on a ribbon of trills.

A. H. Snow

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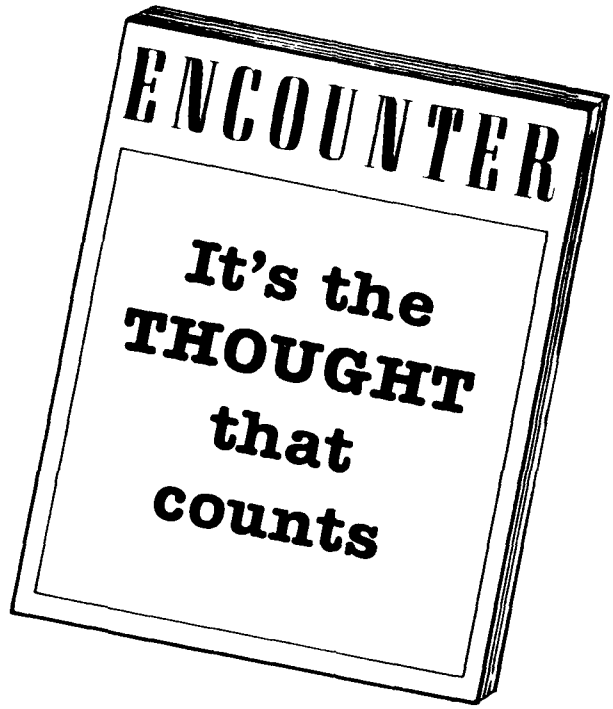

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The Politics of Modern Theatre

Is Beckett a Stalinist?—By MARTIN ESSLIN

IS SAMUEL BECKETT another Hitler or Stalin, and a deadly menace to humanity? That this is indeed the case is the startling thesis of a massive tome by John Peter, the leading theatre critic of the London *Sunday Times*.[1]

Such a book is merely one more in the long line of onslaughts on "modernism", or "the avant-garde" in all its forms, that stretches back to Eduard Hanslick's attacks on Wagner's "*Zukunftsmusik*" or the contemporary London critics' denunciations of Ibsen, and would in itself hardly deserve special attention. Yet this particular example is not only highly symptomatic of the confusion of terminologies and concepts in a period of rapid educational and even intellectual decline, it also imports into that conceptual muddle a very disturbing political element. The accusation that works of art that seem "incomprehensible" or "silly" to an individual critic must therefore be evil examples of totalitarian tendencies—or, indeed, democratic decadence and corruption—is not new either; but here it takes a particularly virulent form.

It is a special irony that the representative of the true, the healthy, and altogether commendable Traditional Art that Mr Peter starts off with is, of all writers, Ibsen himself: the set of *Ghosts* is so realistic that we can even ask ourselves what books Mrs Alving is reading or what she will have for lunch. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Mr Peter feels, when Vladimir pulls a carrot out of his pocket, there is no indication of how he got it, or what he paid for it and what, indeed, he did to earn that money.

Ibsen, he argues, presents us with a world in which we are at home, that we can understand; and therefore we can engage in a dialogue with Ibsen by asking ourselves—and by implication the playwright—such questions about the material circumstances and moral choices of the characters. On the other hand, Beckett simply tells us that Vladimir has a carrot—never mind how he got it, we must simply accept that he has one. We can understand Ibsen; we find *Godot* incomprehensible.

Yet Clement Scott (I quote from the *Daily Telegraph* of 24 February 1891) felt himself in exactly the same predicament after confronting Ibsen:

> "The old theory of playwrighting was to make your story or your study as simple and direct as possible. The hitherto accepted plan of a writer for the stage was to leave no possible shadow of doubt concerning his characterisation. But Ibsen loves to mystify. He is as enigmatic as the Sphinx. Those who earnestly desire to do him justice and to understand him keep on saying to themselves, 'Granted all these people are egotists, or atheists, or agnostic, or emancipated, and what not, still I can't understand why he does this and she does that'. . . ."[2]

Because Mr Peter does not understand where Vladimir got his carrot, he immediately assumes that nobody else can understand it either, and that this refusal of the author to give more realistic details makes the play in which this episode occurs utterly incomprehensible, or at least inaccessible to questioning about the more precise circumstances of the plot and the characters. They are simply "givens" that we must accept without question. He continues:

> "Now what we call conventional plays are full of precisely such things. To understand them is part of our dialogue with the play. We cannot conduct such a dialogue with *Waiting for Godot* because it has no such hidden implications. There is nothing in it, in this sense, to search for. It is a total statement of what it says. It is not open to questions. I shall call it a *closed play*. By contrast *Agamemnon* and *Ghosts* are *open plays*. These terms are not derived from Karl Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies*, a book which at the time of planning and writing this I had not read—indeed I was not even acquainted with Popper's work at all. . . ."

[1] *Vladimir's Carrot: Modern Drama and the Modern Imagination*. By JOHN PETER. André Deutsch, £17.95.

[2] Unsigned notice by Clement Scott, reprinted in *Ibsen: The Critical Heritage* (ed. Egan, 1972), p. 168.

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Here we can already see the political element creeping into the purely formal discussion of different types of drama. An open society is democratic, a closed one totalitarian; open plays—good, closed plays—evil.

What is particularly unfortunate about this loaded choice of terminology is that in the widely accepted language of literary and dramatic criticism the terms "open" and "closed" have been used, for many decades, in precisely the *opposite* sense. Umberto Eco, the Italian critic and one of the founders of modern semiology, published some 30 years ago a book called *L'opera aperta* (*The Open Work of Art*) in which precisely the fact that we can ask ourselves how Mrs Alving paid for her lunch, as well as the neatly rounded-off ending of the play, makes it a "closed" work, whereas the indeterminacy of that point about Vladimir's carrot and the inconclusive ending of *Godot* shows it to be an "open" work of art—open, that is, to an infinite number of interpretations. The questions it raises are perhaps of a more profound nature than the trivial one about the provenance of the money for buying a carrot . . . which the author deliberately omitted from our purview of interest, as being irrelevant to his main concerns.

To reverse the accepted use of terms widely current in one's own critical field must, even if it is merely through ignorance, be regarded as unhappy, if not mischievous. If the transposed use of terms like "open" and "closed" gained some currency as a result of its inauguration in this book, it might well muddy the waters of critical discourse for some time.

Having convinced himself that a play like *Waiting for Godot* presents the audience, or the reader, with a wholly closed structure, inaccessible to any "questioning", John Peter goes on to insist that such works can have only *one* valid meaning:

> "Closed art may face the reader with several alternative meanings, but will accept only one of them as valid."

This is patently untrue. Who is there to accept or reject any interpretation or meaning of a play like *Waiting for Godot*? Certainly not the author. Beckett has steadfastly, indeed heroically, refused to be drawn into any interpretation, version, commentary. Indeed, that is what makes (as I have suggested) Peter's "closed" art much more suitable to be described as "open" art. The literature of questions asked about a play like *Godot*, of possible interpretations of its meaning, is already—less than 40 years after its first publication and performance—one of the largest in the history of drama criticism.

Undeterred by reflections of this kind, Mr Peter, having satisfied himself that there is only one valid interpretation of a play like *Godot*—he omits, by the way, to give any inkling of what he thinks it should be—takes the next step:

> "To all this there is an unexpected and most unpleasant analogy. In a book called *Hitler: The Führer and the People* J. P. Stern analyses the psychology of German totalitarianism and looks, among other things, at the impact of Nazi rallies. These events, Professor Stern observes, were 'perlocutionary' acts: they involved no *interlocution*, or proper communication in both directions. In Hitler's speeches the 'informational element' was slight: he usually said nothing that was new to the audience. Indeed, the effects of these speeches actually depended 'on all but complete foreknowledge of their informational content'.
>
> It is impossible to read this without discomfort. Could there conceivably be something in common between the reception of Hitler's speeches by his audiences and the reception we accord to *Waiting for Godot*? No play could be more unlike a source of mindless and evil intoxication. No one could ever have left a performance of it wishing to intimidate or kill: indeed, one might expect most people to leave the theatre wishing not to do anything at all. And yet the similarities remain: both this play, and the 'perlocutionary act' described by Professor Stern, expect, and depend on, complete and unreserved acceptance: they both ask for a suspension of what Popper calls the 'critical powers of man'. Such a reaction is contrary to everything we have come to understand by the experience of art. Art of any kind is, or we think it is, the creation of other worlds with which we can have a dialogue. And if we are engaged in a dialogue we can neither suspend judgment nor simply submit, not even in delighted recognition or a feeling of identity. Yet those are precisely the things that *Waiting for Godot* asks us to do."

Quite apart from the non-existent premises of this argument (namely, that *Godot* has to be swallowed without any questioning), John Peter's terminology has again come a cropper. He seems to derive his knowledge of the term "perlocutionary act" entirely from a single passage in J. P. Stern's stimulating book. But he completely misunderstands the term. It is not the lack of *informational* content which is the essence of a "perlocutionary act" in the terminology of linguistic philosophy, as developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle, but the fact that it is directed to provoke *action* in the person to whom it is addressed. As Searle puts it:

> "To these notions I now wish to add Austin's notion of the *perlocutionary act*. Correlated with the notion of illocutionary acts is the notion of the consequences or *effects* such acts have on the actions, thoughts or beliefs, etc. of hearers. For example by arguing I may *persuade* or *convince* someone, by warning him I may *scare* or *alarm* him, by making a request I may *get him to do something*, by informing him I may *convince him (enlighten, edify, inspire him, get him to realise)*. The italicised expressions above denote the perlocutionary acts."[3]

In other words, while J. P. Stern used the term "perlocutionary act" correctly in describing Hitler's speeches as being designed to provoke an active reaction in his hearers, such as going out to kill Jews, or die for the Fatherland, the fact that these speeches contained no new information, or were not open to a dialogue with the *Führer* was purely incidental.

[3] John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 25.

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None of the consequences of the perlocutionary acts outlined in the passage from Searle can possibly be applied to a play like *Godot*. To think, therefore, that a play like *Godot*, of which Mr Peter himself asserts that it is more likely to lead to inaction than to action, falls within the purview of the term—or that because, through this misunderstanding of the term, all his "closed" art is forever stained with the taint of being like a Hitler speech, and must automatically be totalitarian—is very wide of the mark.

It is on this wholly mistaken notion that works like those of Beckett, Ionesco, Kafka, Proust, Picasso, and a host of other modern artists are "closed"—and on the misunderstanding that all "perlocutionary acts" must necessarily all be totalitarian outrages, like the speeches of Hitler or Stalin—that John Peter builds his elaborate edifice of 370 pages.

Intent as he is on underpinning his intuition that plays that he finds incomprehensible must be evil and despotic attempts to manipulate him, John Peter seeks the origins of modern art in the well-worn clichés of Wagner and Nietzsche as forerunners of the Nazis. But his arch-villain is none other than that advocate of renunciation and withdrawal from the world, Arthur Schopenhauer. Here too misunderstandings abound.

Admittedly, Schopenhauer called his philosophical magnum opus *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, a title which is untranslatable into English and is certainly wrongly translated as *The World as Will and Idea* (*The World as Energy and Appearance* might, I think, be nearer the mark). However, Schopenhauer from the very beginning is anxious to explain that what he calls *Wille* has nothing to do with human volition; it is meant to indicate, for instance, the tendency of a stone to fall downwards. In other words, Schopenhauer's brilliant intuition was that the essence of the world is "energy", in the widest sense, and that those gravitational and other "forces" appear to our senses as "images", "phenomena"—the visible world. And this is exactly the world picture that modern physics paints when it shows us that the world we experience as visible, touchable, audible, is ultimately reducible to various manifestations of basic energies, such as gravitation or the forces which keep the atom together. Moreover, Schopenhauer found his intuition mirrored in Indian philosophy, which describes the phenomenal world as "Maya"—a web of illusion.

John Peter ignores all this and fastens on a highly tendentious and uncomprehending account of Schopenhauer's aesthetics. When Schopenhauer says that the artist mirrors his experience of "the will", i.e. the flow of energy underlying his emotions and thought, Mr Peter interprets that as advocacy of a Hitler-like imposition of subjective and incomprehensible visions on the unfortunate victims of his despotic volition, the audience—the readers, hearers or viewers:

> "Cubist painting was one great Schopenhauerian act: the artist's Will, seeking to dominate the visible world. . . ."

This totally erroneous interpretation of Schopenhauerian aesthetics, Peter convinces himself, is behind all that evil "closed" art—Wagner's grandiose myths, Nietzsche's notion of "the will-to-power", and, ultimately, such evil geniuses as Hitler . . . and Beckett.

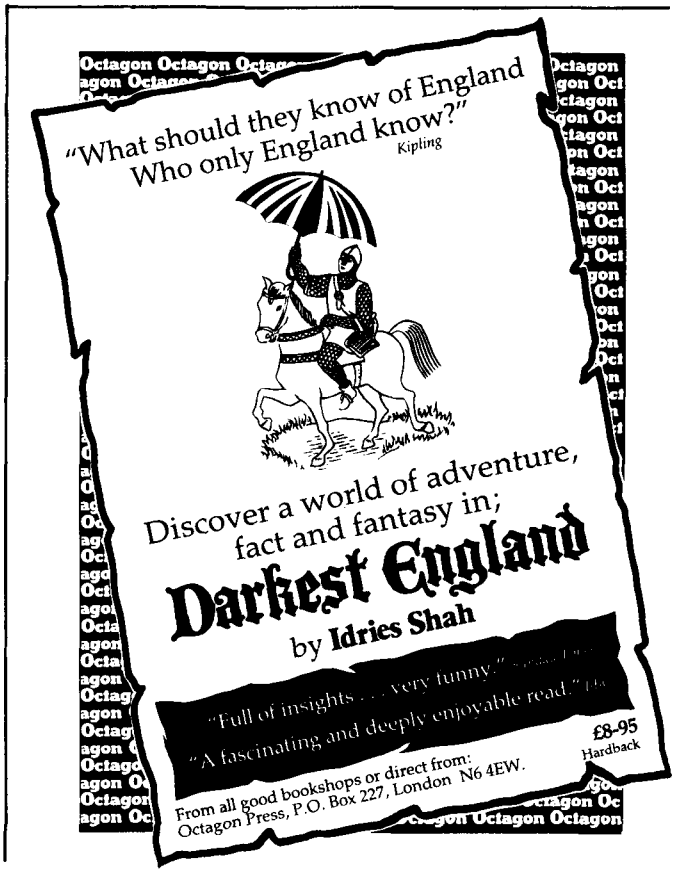
One source of the relentless chain-reaction of muddled thinking and specious argument in Peter's increasingly convoluted presentation is the fact that the term "closed" is a *negative* concept: it merely describes an element that a given work or phenomenon does *not* contain. Everything that lacks Peter's desideratum of "openness" is thus thrown into the same vast container. He finds that "types" that are not wholly individualised characters cannot be open to his kind of questioning—they are "closed art": and there goes the *commedia dell'arte*, Ben Jonson, most of classical comedy! And what of a playwright who insisted that his plays are designed to arouse critical awareness and questioning—Bertolt Brecht? ". . . Brecht's plays . . . are closed plays to the extent that their settings are unreal." Then, what of popular art forms like operetta or the musical?

> ". . . spectacle is a perlocutionary act. It leaves no room for engagement. We do not question a production of Meyerhold's any more than we question a circus act or a dance sequence by Busby Berkeley. . . ."

So Busby Berkeley joins Meyerhold, Barnum & Bailey, and the Broadway musical as a reincarnation of Hitler. . . .

WHAT REMAINS? Only the most literal realism. Anything else is totalitarian despotism, with the artist imposing his Will on a cowed and enslaved audience.

"The theatre is a place of revelation; a scene of action. All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> of this is wholly alien to the perlocutionary act, for the perlocutionary act holds no revelations for us and gives no scope to our critical faculties. When Alan Schneider, one of Beckett's best-known directors, writes about *Happy Days*: 'I accept Winnie's dominating presence in the mound, the literal absence of legs in the first act and of anything below the neck in the second act, as I accept Picasso's lady with several faces or Dali's bent watch', he is describing a partial suspension of his critical faculty: he submits to closed art."

And yet—do we not accept, without questioning their realistic justification, Hamlet's ghost or Prospero's magical powers? or Aristophanes' Cloud-Cuckoo-land? or the wholly irrational decrees of fate that force Oedipus into committing his terrible crimes? or the power of Bacchus to impose terrible delusions on Agave? or, indeed, Ibsen's Button-Moulder and the realm of the Trolls in *Peer Gynt*? What of the allegories of the medieval mystery and morality plays, the wildly unrealistic convolutions of Feydeau's farces—all the wild and wonderful magic of theatre throughout the ages?

The basic assumptions behind Peter's argument seem to me false. If Winnie is gradually sinking into the ground before our very eyes, we are indeed led to question what we see, as a telling image of the workings of Time that brings all of us nearer to the grave as relentlessly and mysteriously as Oedipus's pre-ordained fate inexorably led him to his doom.

There are—who in his senses has ever seriously questioned it?—different types of approaches in art. There is the realistic depiction of surfaces, and there are many different, ultimately no less "realistic", ways of dealing with different aspects of existence. Who would doubt that Swift's use of Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, and Laputans, unrealistic as it was, probed some very real shortcomings of the political process of his time, and, indeed, of human nature itself? We have, at first, to accept these unrealistic images at face value, but only to be made to question and probe them. Far from being "closed", such images are wide open: they have different things to say to different historical periods, simply because of their openness. The image of Oedipus had a different (i.e. religious) meaning to Sophocles's audience from the (psychological) meaning it presents to an audience in the epoch of Sigmund Freud, precisely because such a complex and unrealistic image has a much wider—a far more *open*—range of possible interpretations.

THE NAIVETY, in an uneasy mix with the arrogance, of John Peter's approach is particularly apparent in his assumption of moral superiority when faced with writers like Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. To him—because they show human beings unable to penetrate to a clear conception of the ultimate purpose of existence, and tormented by existential doubt—they seem *amoral*, and therefore *immoral*, utterly evil. In talking about Beckett's *Endgame* he remarks:

> "We are dealing with a world where people's inability to make sense of each other and of themselves reflects a greater inability: that of making sense of the world. Closed drama talks to us about this inability as about a shared experience which is beyond questioning. Wanting to make sense of the world means wanting to know the purpose of our existence in it: it is partly a solipsistic quest, but also an objective moral inquiry."

In other words: John Peter can make sense of the world, Beckett cannot; and that makes Peter not only superior to Beckett, but able to condemn him as an evil, despotic tyrant.

THE ULTIMATE IRONY of John Peter's quixotic adventure into muddledom is that he paints himself into a corner from which it becomes impossible to extricate himself. Having condemned all non-realistic art, he must ultimately come up against the inescapable fact that both Hitler and Stalin advocated exactly the same type of "realistic" approach that he finds the only "open" one.

Hitler castigated all non-realistic art as "*entartete Kunst*". Stalin rejected everything that was not *socialist realism*. Faced with these facts, Mr Peter hits upon a rather ingenious solution: totalitarians resent other "closed" art, because one totalitarian tends to resent all other totalitarians. Furthermore, "socialist realism" is not *really* realistic, because it tries to *distort* reality:

> "Socialist Realist art, too, is torn between the claims of simple realism, the need to represent life as we know it, with its elaborate texture of moral dilemmas, personal responsibilities and alternative possibilities of action, and the claims of the party which imposes on all this the Will of an impersonal political imperative.
>
> This is why works of Socialist Realism resemble works of closed art."

Here Mr Peter has scored an own goal. He has been arguing for more than 300 pages that non-realistic *forms* of art are implicitly politically obnoxious. Yet here he concedes that even the form he advocates as the only morally and artistically legitimate one can convey the same "totalitarian" contents that he so abhors.

Any formal approach or methodology can, of course, be politically and morally either acceptable or unacceptable. To link *one* formal approach with an implied moral or political content as against all others is nonsense. A realistic style may be used to misrepresent reality even more efficiently than an abstract or mythical approach. A "realistic" portrait that flatters the sitter by omitting his less prepossessing features is more of a lie than an abstract painting that has no pretensions to represent reality at all. It does not concern itself with, is not trying to, does not want to represent "reality" (which is to say, the reality of surface appearances). Why in the world should that in itself be evil, dictatorial, or in any way reprehensible?

EVEN IF WE ACCEPT John Peter's misperceived use of the term "perlocutionary act"—that is, if the painting or the theatrical "image" merely implies: "Here it is, take it or leave it!"—

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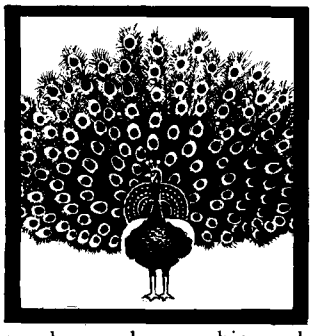
that is the very opposite of being dictatorial. Surely this leaves the consumer a free choice: it's an example of *laissez-faire*—much more so than even Mrs Alving (or Ibsen) telling us what she had for lunch. *That* is something we *must* accept; if she says she had potatoes for lunch, we must believe it. Vladimir never tells us where his carrot came from. We can go on endlessly asking where he could have got it, if we are so inclined; but Beckett tells us that this question is irrelevant to the play. So why worry too much about it?

After all, myths and fairy-tales, dream-narratives and satirical distortions of reality, abstract paintings and geometrical dance numbers are perfectly legitimate forms of art. But it is not the "modern" imagination which is particularly prone to transcend the bounds of John Peter's narrow literalistic realism. On the contrary: realistic art in the sense in which Mr Peter uses Ibsen's realistic dramas (he also wrote a number of non-realistic plays) is a relatively recent phenomenon. But here, too, the vast majority of drama in this style (it includes most television plays, *Coronation Street* as well as *Dallas*, and all situation-comedy) may be realistic in form, but—just like "Socialist Realism"—far from giving an untendentious picture of the world, is, indeed, morally far more questionable than any less realistic forms of drama.

There is, it seems to me, far more human truth and moral depth in Vladimir's carrot than in all the oil-rigs of *Dallas* or *Dynasty*. John Peter may not himself like those forms of popular drama. But in categorising Beckett as the spirit of totalitarian despotism he is barking hoarsely up the wrong tree. He is perfectly at liberty to dislike Kafka, Proust, Wagner, Picasso or Beckett. But he has erected his personal lack of comprehension of what these significant artists are trying to do into a proof of his own moral and intellectual superiority. And this, surely, is very close to what he likes to call a "perlocutionary act".

The Life & Death of Kenneth Tynan

On a Revolutionary Hedonist—By MAURICE CRANSTON



KENNETH PEACOCK Tynan was often asked to write his autobiography, but even when he had signed a contract to do so for a much-needed large advance, he could not do it; looking inside himself made him feel too sick and guilty, and he had to avert his eyes. So instead of an autobiography we have a biography, written by his widow[1] in a plucky, candid way for which she will no doubt be criticised, but which is what he would have wanted. Ken Tynan had a passionate belief in openness which bordered on the exhibitionistic. He had already started recounting the intimate details of his love-life in a loud explosive stammer in Oxford bars and pubs in undergraduate years which really were for him a golden age.

A *Wunderkind* who never fulfilled his promise was Ken Tynan's own view of himself, and it is one which is repeated by most people when they speak of him. And yet he can be seen as a more significant figure than that, a "personality" who somehow embodied or symbolised a moment in contemporary history, and one who exercised a considerable influence on the young. Living always according to the rule of instant pleasure, but using his undoubted gift of eloquence to propagate the political ideas he picked up from Brecht, he helped to produce that fusion of hedonism and Marxism which became so ruinously fashionable in the 1960s.

His bitterness against the bourgeoisie was genuine enough, and he had his own good reasons for it. He was born in what his widow calls a working-class environment, but it was one in which money flowed freely; and young Ken received an excellent education at a grammar school in Birmingham, from which he went on to win a Demyship at Magdalen College, Oxford. As a boy, it seems, he had a rich fantasy life, in which his idols were film stars; he collected their autographs then just as in later life he collected them in person, so that Mrs Tynan's book is full of "names", a long series of celebrated acquaintances whose presence, however brief, gave her husband a reassuring feeling of being among the blessed. Despite his contempt for provincial life, his childhood was evidently happy. The blow came in his last year at Oxford, when he was told the reason why there was so much money at home. "Mr Tynan", his father, was in fact Sir Peter Peacock, a Northern Liberal tradesman, who had been knighted by Lloyd George and maintained, besides the family in Birmingham, another—legitimate—one in Warrington.

The disclosure of this story, similar to that put to such good literary effect by J. R. Ackerley, seems to have upset Ken Tynan, if it did not indeed "traumatise" him in the jargon of the psychoanalysts he occasionally consulted. He had made his name at Oxford as a young man who could *épater le bourgeois* from a safe bourgeois stronghold, and his biographer tells us that he did not forgive his mother for having kept from him the secret of his origins, notwithstanding her continued liberality in doling out funds to him for the rest of her life. As he did not himself believe in keeping secrets, he

[1] *The Life of Kenneth Tynan* By KATHLEEN TYNAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £16.95.

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revealed so much about his own sexual exploits in articles for the press that his widow cannot be accused of indelicacy in recording as much as she does about his preferences and activities in that field, if "field" is the word for the various bedrooms, basements, and first-class aircraft seats in which we are invited to believe that Ken Tynan achieved (and "achieved" is surely the word for someone troubled as he was by impotence in his youth) his orgasms.

HIS MOTHER'S DISCLOSURE of the family secret coincided with his going down from Oxford, an event which marked the end of his creativeness. No one who was at Oxford with him will ever forget the marvellous and original shows he put on in the theatres there as a producer of Shakespeare and Milton as well as of experimental authors, or his performances in cabaret, or his elegant and witty journalism, his bright conversation or, for that matter, the strange pale face and the endearing bad taste of his clothes. He led an assault on the austerity of the later 1940s, and few could fail to cheer him on. At that time he betrayed no interest in politics, and if he had any opinions, they were assumed to be mildly fascistic, so it is no surprise to learn from his biographer that he went to tea with Sir Oswald Mosley and was nowhere more pleased to be on holiday than in Franco's Spain.

After Oxford, what was left of his talent was critical rather than creative. As a play producer, first in the provinces and then in London, he made no mark, and as actor his performance as the Player King in Alec Guinness's *Hamlet* was so appalling that he was never offered another part. The show he did mount successfully was himself; for the 1950s was already the age of instant fame, of publicity for the publicity-hunter, of celebrities celebrated for just being celebrated, so Ken Tynan became a star of the theatre without doing anything to speak of in the theatre. Fairly soon, however, he found a niche for himself as a dramatic critic, and there he really earned a certain immortality. He was the best dramatic critic in the English language since Shaw—without Shaw's judgment, assuredly, but with an uncanny gift for opening the reader's eyes and mind to what was happening on the stage, to the secrets of acting, and to the meaning of a play.

UNFORTUNATELY HE was not satisfied with the job he did so well, but grew restive in the passive role of a spectator in the stalls and the humble routine of newspaper journalism. Fleet Street was too narrow for him. He wanted to be on view, dining with the stars and sleeping with the starlets, and restored to the dominant status of a producer or director. It was not that his reviews showed any partiality in favour of the actors or actresses with whom he socialised. He was capable of cruel utterance, and he saved his cruellest for those who had been most kind to him. When Orson Welles, who had helped put his first book on the map by writing a foreword to it, appeared on the stage as Othello, Ken Tynan published a blistering notice headed "Citizen Coon", and unlucky little Roman Polanski, who gave him work on his film of *Macbeth*, was described as "the original two-foot Pole you would not touch a barge with".

Ken Tynan could be very funny, but he was not often funny without being wounding. His widow says he never expected the people he attacked to feel hurt, and was coolly amazed when his victims failed to enjoy the joke. If he did not understand other people's feelings, it was probably because he never thought about other people when they were out of his presence. On the other hand, he had no sense of humour about attacks directed at himself. Mrs Tynan reports his reaction to Hemingway's accusation in a bar in Spain that he needed glasses to see what was going on in a bullfight: Tynan marched away "white and beside himself with rage". He called out his lawyers when he received what he considered an offensive review of one of his books in *The Times Literary Supplement*.

He had the same sort of double standard on the subject of sexual freedom. He allowed himself as much gratification as he could get, but if a wife or mistress was unfaithful to him, he expressed moral indignation as well as anger and even wrote accusing letters to third parties. Domestic battles appear to have been a feature of both his marriages. Parties, of which he attended an inordinate number, and restaurant meals in company, provided intervals of tranquillity between plate-throwing scenes at home. His first wife, Elaine Dundy, we are told, "did not cook", a deficiency he seems not to have minded, since his regular breakfast was a tin of mulligatawny soup and a spoonful of Marmite. But he was not so pleased when she turned out to be able to write, and secured a marked success with a novel called *The Dud Avocado*. Stormy as it was, the first marriage took a long time to break up; but in the end the first Mrs Tynan found peace in a psychiatric clinic in New England and Ken found as much happiness as his temperament would allow in marriage to a girl who could cook as well as write, and who also clearly possessed the superhuman powers of endurance and fortitude required to live with him until he died. She won his love, like the heroine of a novel by Richardson, by refusing to gratify his lust; an old-fashioned girl who gave him a good deal of sensible advice, which he did not take.

Dissatisfied with the one job he did best, he gave up writing dramatic criticism for *The Observer* in order to try his hand again at creative enterprises. The most conspicuous of these was his revue *Oh, Calcutta!*, intended to be a mind-blowing erotic show to celebrate the end of theatrical censorship and to release the hidden springs of the British—and American—libido. What turned out was well described by a GLC councillor as "nude romp", somewhat indecent from time to time, but nowhere in the least erotic. However, it was so widely condemned in the popular press and by the Mrs Grundys as obscene, that it inevitably became a huge commercial success. Unfortunately for its creator, his own mind was blown if that of his audiences was not, and he did not pay enough attention to the contracts, with the result that while others made millions of dollars out of *Oh, Calcutta!*, he himself received only thousands.

A more worthwhile creative activity he undertook was to help Laurence Olivier set up the National Theatre; but some-

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translated by Diana Thorold

'the great Borges himself much admired this staccato, cinematic fiction of Argentinian self-fashioning... and you can see why. The real streets, neighbourhoods, cinemas, trams and taverns of Buenos Aires, a modernist cosmopolis... merge cunningly into a spooky replay of Orpheus and Eurydice, a magic lantern business of prophecy and curse and archaically hellish fatalism aboard the enigmatic streetcars of South American male desire. It's a very fetching mix indeed, canny and labyrinthine – and only 33 years late in English translation' *Observer*

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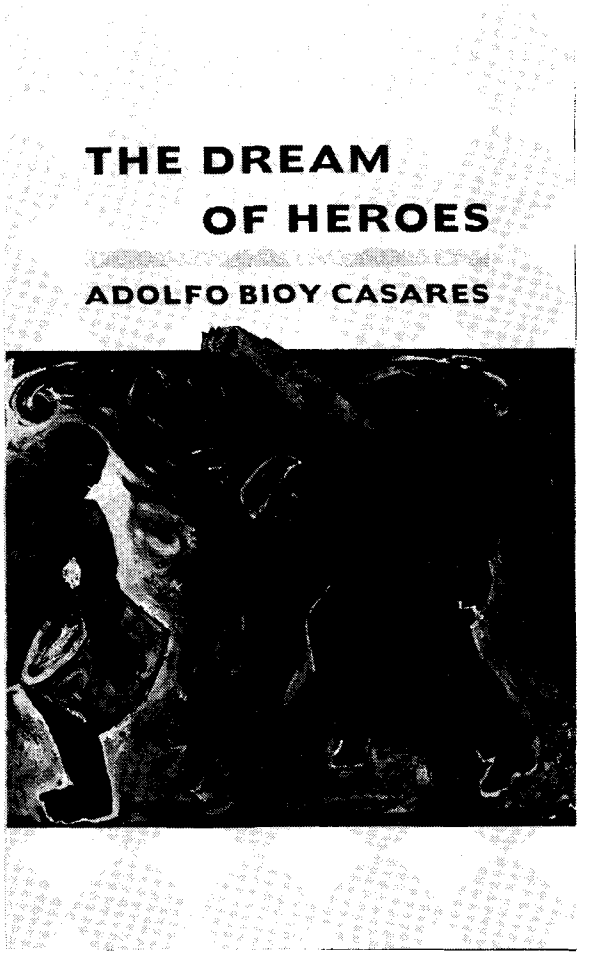

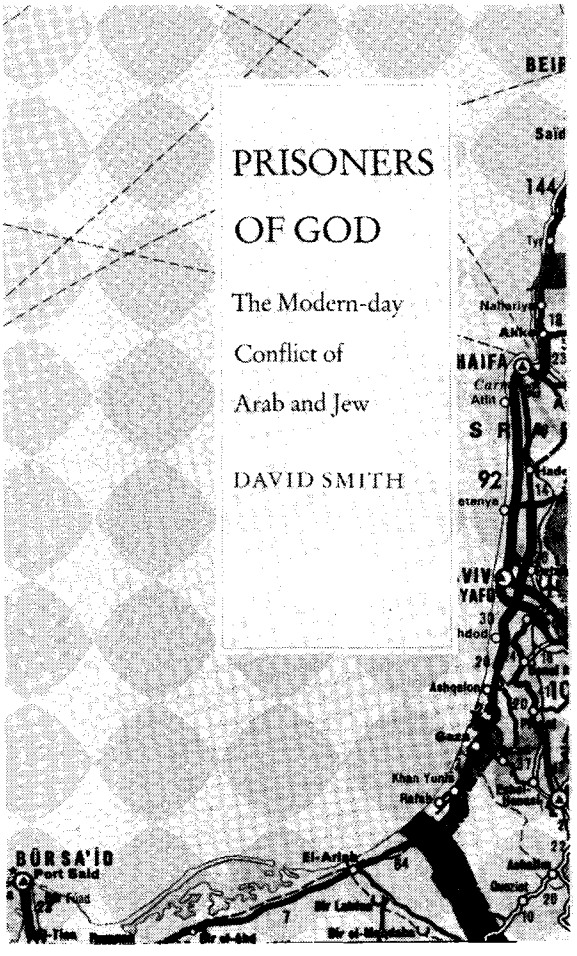

From the award-winning television correspondent:

PRISONERS OF GOD:

The Modern-day Conflict of Arab and Jew

by David Smith

'The viewpoint is that of an observer with no particular axe to grind, a rare occurrence in this emotion-laden region... if you want to understand the dilemma which is usually referred to as the Middle East dispute, or the Palestinian problem, read this book' *Financial Times*

'a writer of arresting prose, with sensitivity to the nuances of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict, and an ability to make it intelligible to a wide readership' *Jewish Chronicle*

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QUARTET BOOKS

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how Ken Tynan was not made to be anybody's right-hand man and Olivier had a certain uneasiness about Ken Tynan ever since he had done a hatchet-job on the acting abilities of his first wife, Vivien Leigh. Besides, even as Literary Director of the National Theatre Ken Tynan could not restrain himself from doing foolish, provocative things, such as promoting an inferior play by Rolf Hochhuth (the one that accused Churchill of conniving in the murder of Sikorski) for the express purpose of making a revolutionary gesture.

REVOLUTIONARY GESTURES were an important part of his way of life after he had been converted to Marxism by Brecht. His political commitment did not entail any uncomfortable sacrifices, such as a boycott of Franco's Spain, where he got so much pleasure from the bullfights, or giving up the Christmas Eve parties of Princess Margaret, or any other modification of the daily round of wine, women and song; in this respect his socialism resembled nothing so much as the Lloyd George form of Liberalism to which his father had subscribed.

Nevertheless it would be a mistake to take Ken Tynan's politics to be anything other than serious. He did not try, and could not expect it to be worth trying, to sing the praises of the Soviet Union or East Germany, but he did much to uphold and advertise the régime of Castro in Cuba, for that revolution had romantic origins which could be exalted to the advantage of the totalitarian outcome. Ken Tynan refused to see anything but good in Cuba. He was undeterred by disclosures that writers imprisoned by Castro were treated even more cruelly than those in Soviet gulags. If there was suffering anywhere he could accept it blithely as necessary. He was curiously callous.

Mrs Tynan quotes an anecdote told by George Plimpton, who claims to have been in a bar in Cuba with her husband when a mercenary named Captain Marks invited them to witness an execution at the fortress:

> "At this point there was a sudden eruption from Tynan. He had been sitting, rocking back and forth in his chair; he came out of it almost as if propelled. . . . Tynan got his voice under control, and Captain Marks could see his opened eyes, now pale and furious, staring at him and the words became discernible—shouts that it was sickening to stay in the same room with such a frightful specimen as an executioner of men ('l-l-l-loathsome'), and as for the invitation, yes, he was going to turn up all right, but in order to throw himself in front of the guns of the firing squad."

It is instructive to compare this story with one told by Alec Guinness, which Mrs Tynan does not quote, but which appears in Guinness's autobiography *Blessings in Disguise* (1985), where he recalls a meeting with Ken Tynan in a bar in Cuba:

> "Sipping elegantly at his daiquiri and drawing deeply on a cigarette he looked pale and urgent. His speech impediment became very pronounced when he said to me 'I have t-t-two t-t-tickets for the fort tonight. One o'clock. Care to join me?' 'What's on?' I asked. 'They are shooting a couple of sixteen-year-olds. A boy and a girl. I thought you might like to see it. One should see everything if one's an actor.' I declined."

Whatever his true feelings about the firing squad, Ken Tynan did not falter in his admiration for the ultimate executioner, Fidel Castro.

Chic in New York being very radical on both the occasions when he went to work there for *The New Yorker*, Ken Tynan's dogmatic Marxism did not diminish the welcome he received from the party-givers, especially as he was often introduced by such an up-market dandy as Cecil Beaton, whose singular conquest of Greta Garbo Ken Tynan tried to imitate with Marlene Dietrich, "disappearing" with her, we are told, "for three days".

AT THE AGE OF FIFTY he shook the dust of England for ever from his feet. He felt rejected when the governing body of the National Theatre demoted him from the office of Literary Director. The revue he devised as a successor to *Oh, Calcutta!* was a flop. He became convinced that the press was persecuting him when he used a rude word on television for the first time in broadcasting history; he had done it for effect, but was aghast at the effect it had. He became universally notorious, like the faintly ridiculous protagonist of a Bateman cartoon, as "The man who said 'fuck' on TV"; even his obituarists remembered him first and foremost as that.

What he minded most was the suggestion made by more than one journalist that his defence of sadistic forms of pornography, the "theatre of cruelty" and suchlike might have furthered the growing cult of violence. He considered this suggestion particularly outrageous.

Even so, his enthusiasm for pornography seems to have become increasingly obsessive. To the dismay of his wife, he devoted months of his time working on a script for a pornographic film, and even had a desk in an office in Paris to set up the production. In the event, it proved a miserable waste of time, since pornographic films in the 1970s were plentiful and cheap as dirt, and no backer would pay over the odds for anything superior—not that the *précis* of the script of *Alex and Sophie* which Mrs Tynan offers sounds any better than run-of-the-mill *cinéma bleu*. Deprived of an audience, he was reduced to acting out his pornographic fantasies with an unemployed actress of a suitably slavish disposition and wearing, beneath the pale silk suits that made him look like an Argentinian architect, ladies' underclothes.

What nobody except his wife realised was that Ken Tynan was a sick man. He had developed emphysema, but instead of looking after himself, he did everything that he was told would make his affliction worse, smoking and drinking as heavily as ever, dosing himself with amphetamines, and taking neither proper exercise nor rest. The self-destructive purpose could hardly be disguised. His wife persuaded him to leave New York for California, where she says his health improved for a time; she publishes a charming snapshot of

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him with their two little children playing happily together on the beach, which would seem to suggest that he had recovered the will to live.

But plainly Hollywood had nothing to offer Ken Tynan that would begin to match his ambitions; and once again it was his wife who was chosen: the second Mrs Tynan rapidly became a successful scriptwriter. Ken Tynan himself took up yet another doomed and foolish enterprise, writing a biography of Wilhelm Reich, aiming to rehabilitate the good name of the psychoanalytic theorist who had been universally denounced as a charlatan when he died in prison in America in 1957.

Ken Tynan had always yearned for some kind of philosophy or theory that would prop up his seemingly contradictory attachment to Marxism and to self-indulgence; and Wilhelm Reich appeared to have just such a system. Stripped of its crackpot trappings, such as the Reichian device of an orgone accumulator for plugging-in to the energy of the universe, the mixture of Communism and "genital liberation" could be made even more compelling, Ken Tynan believed, than Herbert Marcuse's amalgam of sanitised Freud with modified Marx. It was the very extremism of Reich that appealed to him. He thrilled to Reich's argument that the causes of man's present woes were not simply economic exploitation, real as that exploitation was, but more fundamentally the repression of sexuality. Bourgeois society, including its institutions of property, monogamy and the family, were based, it was alleged, on a misdirection of biological energy, which had brought about the crippling of the young by patriarchal despotism and the distortion of man into the anxious, aggressive, frustrated and de-natured creature of bourgeois modernity.

In Wilhelm Reich, Ken Tynan had found his guru, but he had been neglecting his health for too long for him to be able to summon the strength to write anything so demanding as a book-length biography. As he grew weaker, he fell behind with his contracts; he had to repay publishers' advances, he was dunned by the Internal Revenue office, and even if his wife's earnings helped to keep the wolf at bay, they added to the tax bill, so that he had to become for a time a tax exile in Mexico. He returned to California only to die. Emphysema is a cruel disease, and the story of his last months makes for harrowing reading: in and out of hospital for intubations, never able to breathe without the help of an oxygen tank, and often delirious, the end was grim.

He died, aged fifty-three, in Los Angeles, but his widow had the excellent idea of burying his ashes in Oxford, the one place where she knew he had once had the world at his feet.

In the Cornucopia

"Booking" the Cinema—By CHRISTOPHER COOK

TWENTY YEARS AGO, even in the most generously stocked British bookshop, you would have searched in vain for proof that publishers considered the cinema worthy of their readers' attention. A handful of imported French texts, the occasional movie man in the twilight of his celluloid career indulging late literary ambitions, a series of extremely varied monographs from Zwemmer's, and the beginning of Ian Cameron's admirable Studio Vista paperbacks were the modest gleanings to be harvested from a long search through the drama section via literature and the performing arts. What books there were would have furnished no more than a couple of shelves in an extremely small room.

In a decade this trickle had become a river, and ten years on from then it is a torrent. Popular publishers, serious publishers, and academic publishers are "booking" the movies and the cinema in every conceivable format and by all manner of authors. Scholarship rubs shoulders with unabashed filmfannery, and uncritical picture books are set beside impenetrable labours of deconstruction. Saint Cinema has as many cults as an old-time religion, and each demands its own version of the true word.

Why this should be the case is still a matter for general speculation. At one level it clearly reflects the fact that the cinema is no longer the great popular medium of expression it was even a quarter of a century ago; and that as they imperceptibly achieve the dignified status of a museum art, movies can be safely absorbed into the domain of high culture.

It therefore follows that cinema can now be discussed legitimately with the same seriousness as literature, the plastic arts and classical music. No one need apologise any longer for spending an afternoon in the company of Douglas Sirk and Jane Wyman, or for that matter Brian de Palma and Robert de Niro. Even Gracie Fields and the director Terence Fisher have a loyal academic following. (How long before the *Carry On* series is transformed into an emblematic cultural icon?)

This sudden discovery that no one need feel ashamed about enjoying the movies—popular cinema as opposed to so-called "art cinema", which always commanded cultural approbation —is directly linked to one of the most significant areas of academic growth in universities and polytechnics the length and breadth of the land, namely "Film Studies". Film Studies were, and to an extent still are, the Trojan Horse which a new generation of scholars and teachers rolled into university English Departments in the wake of the 1960s. Once the horse had come to rest and been generally admired for its

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noble shape and innocent appearance, out leapt the soldiers of semiology, structuralism and post-structuralism, ready to seize their unsuspecting liberal hosts by the throat. They were of course brandishing their weapons, books well supplied with a quite new range of critical discourses developed from the writings of Saussure, Gramsci, Althusser, and Metz.

In retrospect it is extraordinary how successfully the traditional teaching of English literature has been colonised by Film Studies, with its sharp-edged debates about authorship, narrative, ideology and culture. The present crop of cinema books bears witness to the continuing efforts of the colonisers.

Cinema, Literature and Society, by Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith,[1] is in the vanguard of this drive for critical *lebensraum*. In setting out their methodological stall, Miles and Smith freely acknowledge a debt to the development of Cultural Studies at the Open University; and in choosing the literature and cinema of Britain in the 1930s as their case study, they strike precisely the note of contemporary relevance which is the touchstone of current Film Studies. One may have misgivings about a work which opens with L. P. Hartley's much abused phrase, "The past is another country", but the ensuing explanation of Gramsci's ideas on hegemony and culture is fluent and elegantly presented. The operation of the hegemonic process in relation to the literature and cinema of the period is not always as straightforward as the authors might like it to be, and the most perceptive sections of the book bear a passing resemblance to the much-despised "lit. crit."—in particular, an attempt to restore Aldous Huxley to the pantheon of approved '30s writers.

However, the three chapters on "the working-class novel"—a contradiction in cultural terms, Miles and Smith argue, since the novel is an essentially bourgeois élitist form—does an excellent job in clearing away the sentimental and nostalgic undergrowth which two generations of the Left have encouraged to grow round a book like *Love on the Dole*. The sections on British cinema are less sure-footed. It is surely an over-simplification to suggest that John Grierson's documentary movement, while reaching only a minority in the inter-War years, prepared the ground for British popular television in the 1950s and 60s. Is this really a paradigm of hegemony in action, of élitist culture compromising with popular ambitions in order to ensure its own ideological survival? That's not how most of us read *Double Your Money* and *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* in the 1960s.

John Grierson rates scarcely more than a passing reference in Stephen G. Jones's *The British Labour Movement and Film 1918-1939*,[2] the most recent publication in the excellent Cinema and Society series edited by Jeffrey Richards, who writes, in an editorial preface:

> "We believe that the rich and multifarious products of the cinema constitute a still largely untapped source of knowledge about the ways in which our world and the people in it have changed since the first flickering images were projected on to the silver screen. . . ."

Few would wish to disagree.

How the British Left—the trade unions, the Labour Party, and the Communists—reacted to the cinema between the two World Wars revealed as much about their internal divisions as it does about the cinema. Jones draws a sharp line between working-class and socialist culture to mark the difference between ordinary men and women seeking pleasurable escape from the nastier realities of the Depression in their local Odeons and Regals, and committed members of the Workers' Film and Photo League, say, intending to challenge the power of bourgeois ideology and show the class struggle for what it was, red in tooth and claw. Even on comparatively simple issues such as whether cinemas should be opened on Sundays, the Left rarely agreed. The relevant trade unions were concerned that their members would be exploited, the nonconformist strand in the Labour Party favoured keeping Sunday for the Sabbath, while libertarian Socialists were all for more freedom for more people.

There does seem to have been a general view that the cinema was sapping the proletarian strength of its mainly working-class audience by supplying an uninterrupted diet of bourgeois propaganda. While it's true that the newsreels of the 1930s needed a corrective, and that the paucity of reports on Spain and the British Union of Fascists (not to mention complete silence about the National Unemployed Workers Movement) carried self-censorship to new heights, it's simple-minded to carry the argument a step further and conclude that working-class audiences in the '20s and '30s were just passive little Gradgrindian vessels waiting to be filled with alien middle-class values. Stephen Jones is surely right: "The notion that film had the function or the effect of sustaining the dominant ideology is, to say the least, problematic."

The West is the principal problem for Third World cinema, according to Roy Armes. And in terms of cinema that means Hollywood, which has not only dominated exhibition and distribution systems in the developing world, but also foisted its particular styles and formats on to would-be directors. How to roll back the frontier of cultural colonialism is therefore the principal task that has faced film-makers such as Satyajit Ray, Glauber Rocha, Yilmaz Güney, and Ousmane Sembene, whose work is surveyed in the final section of *Third World Film-Making and the West*.[3] The difficulty is that each one of these directors is compromised by a personal history as well as by that of his country. Ray, for instance, was educated within a British Indian tradition and learned his film-making from working with Jean Renoir. From the point of view of world cinema

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[1] *Cinema, Literature and Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Inter-War Britain*. By Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith. Croom Helm, £25.00.

[2] *The British Labour Movement and Film 1918-1939*. By Stephen G. Jones. Routledge, £25.95.

[3] *Third World Film-Making and the West*. By Roy Armes. University of California Press, $49.95, £31.20; paper $17.95, £11.20.

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history, it is interesting that so many Third World directors have taken a particularly national version of Italian neo-realism as the starting-point for their own cinema—neo-realism being perhaps the one Western film aesthetic that takes a director as close to his particular society as possible without being documentary.

In his opening general survey of Third World films, Armes is right to remind us how the West always chooses to view non-Western cinema through the prism of its own cultural lens. The implication is that, before we can begin to write a proper history of the development of cinema throughout the world, there will be a need to redefine—and possibly reinvent—our terminology. None the less, the truly remarkable thing about so many Third World directors is that they manage to make films at all. Questions of cost and cultural colonialism aside, many if not most of them live under the constant threat of censorship, and worse. As Armes writes of the Turkish director Yilmaz Güney: "In all of the 26 years since his début in the film-making industry he has spent 12 years in jail, 2 doing military service and 3 in exile."

The main assumption behind Roy Armes's work is that the health of a country's cinema can be measured by the degree to which its films reflect particular national characteristics and local concerns. In other words the old chestnut of national *vs* international cinema. Leaving aside the question of what exactly we mean by "national", and assuming for better and probably worse that American capital will continue to dominate the manufacture of popular cinema, how precisely a nation constructs its own identity on celluloid is increasingly a matter for historical research.

In *Cinema and Ireland* Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill offer an historical overview of Irish cinema from its beginnings at the end of the 19th century to the present day, and more significantly a critical account of the way Ireland has been represented by indigenous and foreign film-makers.[4] This is a critical film history at its very best: an elegant exposition of the way in which Ireland is viewed as either a quaint pastoral paradise, or a nation of men and women cursed to live out an unending cycle of violence—John Ford's *The Quiet Man*, Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out*, and David Lean's *Ryan's Daughter* all deploy one or both of these myths.

But, according to Hill and Gibbons, hope is at hand: a new generation of Irish film-makers—Pat Murphy, Peter Ormerod and Cathal Black—are challenging old-established stereotypes and demythologising Irishness. It's ironic that, however successful these directors may be, the kind of cinema they are making is unlikely to reach the mass audience who helped to construct such a distorted view of Ireland and the Irish in the first place. They are all at home watching international television, much of it from Britain and America, who according to the authors of *Cinema and Ireland* were principal co-conspirators in the manufacturing of the myths.

Personal myth, often called autobiography, lies at the heart of each one of the films directed by the late Andrei Tarkovsky, the subject of a short critical monograph by Mark Le Fanu.[5] "A residue of unexplained autobiographical material", writes Le Fanu, "is not necessarily fatal to a work of art, even a public one like the cinema. Tarkovsky's work is, more than most film-makers, simultaneously autobiographical and oblique." You cannot surely have it both ways. Autobiography can indeed provide nourishing film fare, but oblique autobiography is a recipe for confusion, which is probably one reason why Tarkovsky's work divides critics and audiences so strongly.

Le Fanu is well aware of this division, and at times seems almost to apologise for his enthusiasm. Of *Andrei Roublev* he writes:

> "What is it that makes it so powerful, allows us to come away refreshed from each viewing? Above all, it seems to me, it is the film's uncompromised spiritual authenticity."

And here we have the heart of the matter. Spiritual authenticity is about as easily subjected to proper critical analysis as cold potatoes. You either like it and them, or you don't. To account for his admiration, Le Fanu (writing at times like a religious apologist) is reduced to comparing Tarkovsky with other film-makers such as Eisenstein and Dreyer, or developing a contemporary variation on the symbolist notion of "correspondences" to explain the effect of the Russian director's imagery in editing. One sympathises with the predicament, but Le Fanu's book does smack somewhat of Dr Johnson's dictum about women preaching.

Equally surprising, indeed baffling, particularly on a second reading, are the 33 narrative nuggets offered in an American translation of Michelangelo Antonioni's *That Bowling Alley on the Tiber*.[6] Are we really supposed to be-

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[4] *Cinema and Ireland*. By Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill. Croom Helm, £22.50.

[5] *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky*. By Mark Le Fanu. British Film Institute, £16.00, paper £7.95. See also his article "Tarkovsky", in Encounter (November 1985).

[6] *That Bowling Alley on The Tiber: Tales of a Director*. By Michelangelo Antonioni. Translated by William Arrowsmith. Oxford University Press, £6.95.

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lieve, as William Arrowsmith suggests in his portentous introduction, that these are sketches for films as yet unmade? If that is the case, then most readers will be grateful that it is so, for with a few exceptions it is extremely hard to discern the hand of a cinematic master behind these oblique, fragmentary and self-conscious outlines, some of which are no more than a couple of pages in length. Their occasional banality is perhaps proof that Antonioni's greatest contribution to post-War European cinema has everything to do with capturing the mood behind the moment and not the moment itself. As he writes about one story, it's "the sort of film I always wanted to make and have never been able to, a mechanism not of facts but of moments that recount the hidden tension of those facts".

For real insight into the way in which a great director works, you might consult Jan Leyda and Zina Voyrow's *Eisenstein at Work*.[7] The design of the book—which includes a chronology of the Soviet director's life and work, writings and sketches from his notebooks, photographs, and a cursory linking text—is initially as confusing as a constructivist print, but perseverance is rewarded. The strange spiralling sketches for the third part of *Ivan the Terrible* hint at what a masterpiece may have been lost to world cinema, while in a totally different cultural context the initial designs for Wagner's *Die Walküre*, staged at the Bolshoi Theatre to celebrate the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact, and the first production of the opera by the Company since 1914, are a fascinating blend of Arthur Rackham and what was to become the Bayreuth house style under Wieland Wagner. Eisenstein himself stares out of any number of photographs, hair on end, a demonic smile playing across his face. It's genius as imagined by German Expressionist cinema. Despite the suppression and mutilation of Eisenstein's later work, maybe the last laugh was indeed on Stalin.

As full time creeps up behind them the generation of film-makers from the 1930s and 40s are increasingly recording their last laughs before their reputations are consigned to the film historians. Men like Michael Powell are at an age when the directing has stopped, but there is yet time to record their version of the past. Powell's *A Life in Movies*[8] is in fact only just over half a life, since it ends with the opening of *The Red Shoes* in 1948. The best of the book is the opening description of life as a boy in Kent before the First World War: hops and horses, a devoted nanny, and an eccentric father who eventually "bolted" after the War and settled in France.

The certainty and security of that world as Powell describes it find a spiritual echo in the series of films which he and Emeric Pressburger were to make during the Second World War, in particular *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp, A Canterbury Tale* and *A Matter of Life and Death*. The cultural historian would undoubtedly describe it as a socially necessary myth privileged by memory and wealth, drawing particular strengths from the national myth of the long British summer before August 1914, that Eden from which the nation was only expelled by the mechanised slaughter along the Western Front. That's as may be, but it exemplifies Powell's and Pressburger's role in developing the 1940s myth of national unity, which is perhaps one of their principal cinematic legacies.

Powell was given his first leg up the movie ladder by Rex Ingram, the director of silent films, who in the 1920s was shooting *Mare Nostrum* comfortably close to Father Powell's hotel in the South of France. What Michael Powell rather coyly describes as a love affair with the muse of cinema had begun; it was an affair that led back to Britain, quota quickies, Alexander Korda at Denham, and eventually the Archers film production partnership with Emeric Pressburger. There were other love affairs along the way, generally with leading ladies, and Powell describes them candidly, perhaps mindful of the fact that for many his greatest film is *Peeping Tom* (1960s), a frank celebration of voyeurism—an appropriate conjunction of media and message, since one strand of current film theories suggests that voyeurism is the principal pleasure afforded by movies.

For this reader, Powell rarely reveals himself as a particularly attractive personality. He is arrogant, demanding, ruthless, and rarely wrong in his judgment. J. Arthur Rank—whose cash it was that made the Archers' best films possible—is reviled for losing his nerve over *The Red Shoes*, while Korda—whose ambitions to create an international cinema to rival Hollywood at Denham Studios played a crucial part in destroying confidence in the British cinema in the late 1930s—is celebrated as a movie-making buccaneer.

But one should not protest too much. The men who made the movies were generally monsters; it was the only way of reining in the commercial beast they were riding. As was said in another context, "the fault lies in our stars".

In a Sam Spiegel production, the only star was the movie. After that came Spiegel himself. The best that can be said of Andrew Sinclair's brief memoir of Spiegel[9] is that it's a curious tribute to friendship; the worst, that it asks us to forgive a lecherous, deceitful braggart for begetting films like *Lawrence of Arabia, The African Queen* and *On The Waterfront*.

Most readers won't wish to bother to square that particular circle. In any case, they would be better advised to invest their money in a pair of good cinema seats and spend an evening with the real thing, for this is the kind of film book that makes one almost nostalgic for the time when you could walk into a shop knowing that somewhere at the end of the drama section there might be just a handful of texts. On the other hand, there must be a few bruised fruit at the bottom of every cornucopia—and that surely is a small price to pay in return for publishers' taking the cinema seriously.

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[7] *Eisenstein at Work*. By Jan Leyda and Zina Voyrow. Methuen, £9.95.

[8] *A Life in Movies*. By Michael Powell. Methuen, £7.95.

[9] *Spiegel: The Man Behind the Movies*. By Andrew Sinclair. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

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Conjecture of a Time

Interrogating Shakespeare—By VIVIAN THOMAS

STUDENTS OF literature, theatre-goers, and even academics must occasionally wonder when confronted by a new batch of Shakespeare studies whether they are being offered old wine in new bottles. Close scrutiny of recent critical works ought to reassure them, for these are not confined to textual exegesis but range widely over the intellectual and social context of the plays, including an exploration of sources, stage images and traditions—and, more recently, a serious evaluation of the plays in performance.

Analysis of Shakespeare's plays has long since ceased to be primarily a matter of study in the study. As the mesh of the net through which they are sifted becomes ever finer, awareness of their complexities and ambiguities grows. Each play seems to have within it several variants, and their multidimensional nature gives rise to a seeming freshness and a capacity to provoke contrary opinions. It is this quality which creates a sense of Shakespeare as our contemporary.

Not only do the plays appear to reflect—and reflect on—each age in a different way, but a play which has been relatively neglected, such as *Troilus and Cressida*, can suddenly seem to be Shakespeare's most modern drama. As the plays reflect and interrogate each age, so each generation of critics, directors, and actors interrogates the dramas. Far from squeezing Shakespeare dry, this diversity of approach yields new harvests of understanding—and exposes previously unseen dilemmas, both of critical evaluation and of the nature of the human condition.

One of the best recent examples of a searching exploration to this multidimensional nature is Graham Bradshaw's *Shakespeare's Scepticism*.[1] His main thrust is to demonstrate the fundamental scepticism embodied in the plays. Their vitality resides not in a capacity to provide comforting answers but in the disconcerting propensity to expose us to unsettling questions.

Bradshaw embraces what Dr Johnson found distasteful in Shakespeare's work. Johnson complained:

> ". . . he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time or place."

Shakespeare's plays, Bradshaw affirms, reveal the dramatist as someone who is "both more sceptical than his idealistic characters and more tentatively-sceptically-affirmative than his nihilists and dogmatic sceptics", so that the probing and dissection of values may give rise to the view that "There are, or may be, no objective values, but the need to endow life with value and significance is an objective fact about human nature." Consequently an important distinction is to be made between "*dogmatic* scepticism, as represented by the terminal, materialistic nihilism of a Thersites, Iago or Edmund, and *radical* scepticism, which turns on itself—weighing the human need to affirm values against the inherently problematic nature of all acts of valuing".

Before engaging in studies of *Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth* (and he has something challenging and invigorating to say about each of these plays), Bradshaw points to the need to be constantly aware of Shakespeare's multiple perspectives:

> "Shakespeare's extraordinary imaginative empathy constantly allows us to see and feel how a character—Macbeth, Shylock, Othello—apprehends his own situation; at the same time the plays frame dual or multiple perspectives both on the characters and on issues like 'love' and 'honour'."

Likewise, he draws attention to a vital feature of the dramatist's language.

> "A stylistic register may provide a remarkably comprehensive index to moral, social and political attitudes. We see this when the stoic, republican Brutus addresses the Romans in prose while Antony inflames them with verse: the one man does not know or want to know how to manipulate others, and is—like Hotspur—manipulated; the other is, like Hal, a virtuoso who manipulates others and even his own deepest genuine emotions."

But the issue is rather more problematical than Bradshaw allows. For instance, the loveliest speech in *Measure for Measure* is delivered by the disreputable, scurrilous, and licentious Lucio (I. iv. 40-44). The best that Bradshaw can do with this is to claim that these lines are "delivered sardonically", and are "all the more disconcerting" for that. This is one of the few occasions when he appears a little flatfooted.

Given that Bradshaw's central preoccupation is with the question of values, it is appropriate that the lynchpin of his

[1] *Shakespeare's Scepticism*. By GRAHAM BRADSHAW. Harvester Press, £29.50.

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book (and its starting-point) is *Troilus and Cressida*. This is surely the most sceptical and interrogative play in the canon, besides being the most modern. Bradshaw seizes on the debate between Hector and Troilus in which the former initially argues in favour of ending the Trojan war, insisting that Helen is "not worth what she doth cost the keeping". Troilus's riposte is: "What's aught but as 'tis valued?"

Shakespeare's interrogation of values begins with the Prologue, and pervades the play. Bradshaw's first chapter is incisive and stimulating, but the richness of the play is such that his analysis, though telling, is limited. Moreover, his comments here appear cramped and gnomic. For instance, when he says, "We might wonder how any attentive critic could resist the conclusion that the Hector-problem is properly resolved by seeing through him—as a hollow man who needs to be admired as Cressida needs to be desired", there is a sense in which he is right, but there is far more to the question than he allows. Despite the occasional over-compression of argument, a key paragraph highlights Bradshaw's sharp cutting edge:

> "The play nowhere shows what a *true* hero or lover is like; where its exuberantly mordant, unpacking energies seem to correspond with those of terminal scepticism, it implies that there is no such thing. But the play also makes us register the life-denying, humanly impoverishing consequences of such a view. . . . And the play's paradoxicality corresponds with what I suggested, in Chapter One, would be the radically sceptical Shakespearean formulation of J. L. Mackie's observation that there are no objective values: there are, or may be, no objective values, but the need to endow life with value and significance is an objective fact about human nature."

While Bradshaw believes that there is more to be gained by consideration of the plays in terms of chronology rather than by means of any generic classification, he makes an interesting observation in contrasting two of the problem plays. Of *Measure for Measure* he says: "This play's scepticism differs from that of *Troylus and Cressida* in that the earlier play explores the *non-objectivity* of values while the later play explores the incompatibility of different *absolute* values."

In his exploration of the multitudinous enigmas of *Hamlet*, Bradshaw begins with two questions: "What kind of play could so enthral the western imagination?" and "How could any work have seemed to submit to so many divergent and incompatible readings, without being in itself flawed and obscure?" His answer to the second question, following a fascinating discussion of the play, is somewhat disappointing. He accepts the conclusion advanced by J. M. Robertson in *The Problem of Hamlet* (1919) though not the means of arriving at it: namely, that Shakespeare failed to effect a perfect grafting between the structure and action of an earlier and since lost *Hamlet* and his modern sceptical and questioning hero.

J. C. Trewin's *Five and Eighty Hamlets*[2] is a personal response to productions he has seen over six decades. A book to be savoured by the fireside on a winter's evening, this is no encyclopaedia to be plundered by research students but a very individual response to diverse productions, delivered in an engagingly chatty style which will have particular appeal to those who have enjoyed reading Trewin's theatre criticism over the years. He conveys a sense of significant changes in the theatrical landscape, ranging from the primacy of the Birmingham Rep in its heyday to the evolution of the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford, almost casually charting the shifts in fashions and structures.

The great pleasure of the book lies in Trewin's ability to convey a sense of a style or approach with an incisive phrase, and in his capacity to generate a kaleidoscopic vision of a performance. In the former category is his reference to Mark Dignam's "smiling villain of a Claudius, metallic fox rather than 'bloat King'"; and his commentary on a performance at Stratford's intimate Other Place in 1976: "There had seldom been a better Ghost than Griffith Jones, who could be an unearthly figure even when brushing past my left shoulder."

Trewin's feeling of excitement about the play, which was ignited, he says, when he first read it at the age of eight, is manifest. Here is his description of Richard Pasco's performance at the Bristol Theatre Royal:

> "Like many people's my Hamlet had been (and is) composite, and on his Bristol showing Pasco would be prominent in any final mosaic: possibly for the prose scene, so gently phrased in its grace and honesty, with Horatio before the Play; the verbal sparring with the King after Polonius's death; and the courtly salute to Laertes, 'Give me your pardon, sir', before the duel that must end all. When this Hamlet died the man of Ophelia's panegyric had died with him."

Trewin describes with equal fervour Derek Jacobi's Hamlet, performed in 1977:

> "At thirty-eight he was neither an aspiring undergraduate nor a peevish youth fitted better to a street corner than the Danish throne. Logical, graceful, possibly the most touching Hamlet since John Neville, but fortified always by his fiery spirit, he re-charged my faith in the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword. To listen to him was like reading the play in a fresh format: no emphases were follow-my-leader."

Arthur McGee's *The Elizabethan Hamlet*[3] aims to represent the play as it would have been perceived by the Elizabethan audience. His view is that modern perceptions of *Hamlet* are far removed from the response of the original audience, in a way which softens and sentimentalises. McGee interrogates the religious debates and injunctions, censorship laws, attitudes to madness, and other matters relating to fundamental issues incorporated in the play. His conclusion is that the Ghost is unequivocally evil, and that Hamlet is satanic as he becomes caught up in his pursuit

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[2] *Five and Eighty Hamlets*. By J. C. Trewin. Hutchinson, £14.95.

[3] *The Elizabethan Hamlet*. By Arthur McGee. Yale University Press, $20.00, £14.95.

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of revenge. Virtually every aspect of the hero's behaviour, including his role as fool or madman, reveals him as subject to the Devil's manipulation. After a thoroughgoing examination of the prevailing theological doctrines and prescriptions, and an analysis of censorship in theory and practice, McGee concludes his case against the proposition of a "good" Ghost from Purgatory as follows:

> "There are strong grounds for believing that the censorship jealously guarded against the doctrine of Purgatory as expressed in recusant literature, that its attitude to the drama was just as stringent, and that very probably there was no exception to this rule in the licensing of books. To put the matter in more graphic form: it is impossible to find a single Elizabethan who could, in print, voice his belief in Purgatory. Only a Roman Catholic would have wished to do so, for to Protestants Purgatory was either a joke or a confidence trick, or both. But it should be added that not even a Roman Catholic of the time would have believed in a revenge ghost from Purgatory."

Laertes is described as a "villain cast in the mould of Cesare Borgia". Not even Horatio's judgment can be trusted, nor can he escape damnation: "Horatio, it is true, appears to accept that the Ghost is 'honest' but he is a partner to a diabolic pact sworn in the presence of Satan and is no more capable of rational judgment than Hamlet."

Given the thrust of McGee's argument, many theatre-goers and critics would be inclined to inquire what attraction, if this interpretation is correct, the play held for Shakespeare's first audience. McGee's answer is straightforward:

> "There is no doubt that the Elizabethans relished their revenge tragedies—the religious prohibitions added spice to the drama. If there was also a lay approval of blood revenge, as has been claimed, it would not have fundamentally altered this basic attitude. Revenge was all the more entertaining precisely because it was forbidden and because at the end it led to Hell and damnation. Far from reducing the dramatic effect for the Elizabethans their religion, which presented them with the prospect of damnation, was 'box-office'. . . . They enjoyed their forbidden fruit and we may therefore ask ourselves why we are so keen to turn it, as it were, into a Newtonian apple—for them the sin of revenge had to have 'no relish of salvation in it'."

If we accept this view, then we must recognise that to the Elizabethans the play which has cast such a powerful spell over audiences for almost four centuries meant something entirely different.

An alternative response, of course, is to grant the validity of the evidence which McGee provides in his audacious study; but to reject the conception of a universality of viewpoint among Elizabethans on such a contentious matter of theology. As Graham Bradshaw argues in his response to Eleanor Prosser's work, which advances a thesis similar to McGee's:

> "Protestantism had of course dispensed with Purgatory, as a Roman invention; Eleanor Prosser's *Hamlet and Revenge* [1967] collects a large body of evidence to show how Elizabethans were 'bombarded' with reminders that souls could not return since they were justified by faith alone and proceeded directly to Heaven or the other place. But it is hard to see why the sustained bombardment could ever have been thought necessary, unless people 'needed' it—because their ideas about the after-life were far more confused and jumbled with scraps of folklore and Catholicism than some tidy-minded historians care to suspect."

Although McGee's polemic may win few converts, it will nevertheless be enjoyed for its fluency of style and its abundance of fascinating material.

A VERY DIFFERENT kind of book is Marion Lomax's *Stage Images and Traditions*.[4] Concerned particularly with the years 1607-14, she focuses on such plays as *Macbeth, Pericles, Cymbeline*, Webster's *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, Ford's *The Broken Heart* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

A large part of the pleasure derived from this study lies in following the variety of possibilities, often contradictory, to which stage images are amenable. Marion Lomax is well aware that there are difficulties in insisting on specific meanings arising out of an analysis of these features of the plays. But these symbols are highly suggestive when they act to reinforce thematic patterns manifested in such forms as verbal imagery.

Her account of the role of Diana in *Pericles* is presented in too schematic a fashion, but it does alert the reader to the pervasive significance of Diana as a symbol in the play. More effectively rendered is her exposition of the symbolic significance of the eagle in *Cymbeline*. She is at her best, however, in the chapter on Webster, where her discussion of the significance of visual images and symbols is fully integrated with a wider critical appreciation—as the following quotation, which contrasts the achievement of *The Duchess of Malfi* with *The White Devil*, indicates:

> "In many ways the moulding of characters by other characters reaches a greater refinement in *The Duchess of Malfi* and moves beyond the bounds of entertaining burlesque, self-directed deaths, or semi-tragic confusions. In the later play, the moulding of characters is juxtaposed with the visual images and representations of effigies, and is therefore firmly involved with the overlapping of life and death, the natural and the artificial, the private and the public. . . ."

VERY OFTEN, books that explore the social and intellectual background of Shakespeare's England convey an impression that the world of the Elizabethans was so different from ours that we have to think like an Elizabethan in order to gain a proper understanding of the plays. S. C. Boorman's *Human*

[4] *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford.* By MARION LOMAX. Cambridge University Press, £22.50.

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Conflict in Shakespeare[5] is refreshingly different, for he provides a fascinating chapter on background which enables the student to acquire valuable insights into the world of Shakespeare's contemporaries—especially a sense of the body/soul dichotomy with all its implications —without attempting to persuade us that Elizabethans were fundamentally different from ourselves.

Shakespeare is also placed in a dramatic context in a chapter which considers the relevance of the miracle plays and the moralities, and examines his immediate precursors and contemporaries. The remainder of Boorman's work is devoted to a critical evaluation of all Shakespeare's plays, using as a central concept the phenomenon of human struggle: "the tensions between soul and body, immortality and mortality, free will and fate, reason and unreason." There is nothing narrowly schematic about his approach, and his critical perceptions, vigorous and incisive, will appeal to a wide range of readers. Although his comments are generally perceptive and well balanced, his discussion of *Measure for Measure*, for example, fails to chart its full complexities because he believes that Shakespeare grafts the realistic part of the play on to a conventional romantic comedy "plot contrivance". As he puts it:

> "In the first half of the play Shakespeare had established the main characters as real persons assailed by their disturbing inner struggles, and the starting situation had thus become an epitome of real life, however unlikely the setting. In the second half of the drama these characters had faded into mere players in a plot, sufficiently alive of course, yet out of key with their beginnings."

If this were true, *Measure for Measure* would not be nearly as disturbing and perplexing as generations of critics and theatre-goers have found it. The current Royal Shakespeare Company production gives powerful support to the view that the play is designed with scrupulous care to construction. The final outcome is not revealed: like key characters, we are left contemplating possible scenarios. The realism of the play is intense, and unlike tragedy or comedy rejects "closure". The world of the stage spills over directly into life outside the theatre.

IT IS WORTH emphasising the vital relationship between critical studies based on a thorough exploration of the text, and the plays on the stage. The recent RSC production of *Troilus and Cressida*, for instance, created a wider awareness of the play's modernity. In many ways *Troilus* represents the touchstone of current Shakespeare criticism: it is the supreme example of Shakespeare's exploration of the most fundamental aspects of the human condition. All values and concepts—even the concept of character itself—are subjected to relentless interrogation.

In an essay which has been concerned with textual criticism, visual imagery, symbolism, and theatre criticism, it may be appropriate to conclude with a comment which reveals the intermingling of these currents and also centres on Shakespeare as our contemporary. Through Shakespeare's tragedies, men's failures possess a moving grandeur. In *Troilus and Cressida* we are conscious of the unforgivable folly and incompetence of mankind: there is no consolation of failed greatness, and Shakespeare intended none. For all its brilliant comedy, the play ends on a bleak note. As one theatre critic (Michael Billington, in *The Guardian*, 27 June 1985) commented on the concluding moments of the 1985 RSC production:

> "If any one character sums up the mood of this production it is the Pandarus of Clive Merrison. . . who finally sits picking out a wistful tune on the piano as the lights of battle blaze and as structured society disintegrates. . . a chilling moment: an unforgettable image of a collapsing civilisation."

The effect was to create an image full of resonance for the modern audience—a vision of artefacts remaining after the makers had destroyed themselves.

[5] *Human Conflict in Shakespeare*. By S. C. BOORMAN. Routledge, £25.00.

After Akhmatova

I never call you in the night;
That is a right that is not mine.
Ringing telephones, empty rooms
Tell me only that I must lie
And tell myself you're only out,
Buying cigarettes, or wine.

You'll be back tomorrow afternoon,
Fresh as clover, false as rain
That falls a day on desert ground
And then is gone, lost in the sand;
As you are lost—silent-winged,
Lost in freedom; disappeared.

Stephen Schwartz

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Books Encountered

To Thine Own Self Be True: The Rebirth of Values in the New Ethical Therapy. By LEWIS M. ANDREWS. Anchor Press/ Doubleday, $16.95.

Despite the title from Polonius and a subtitle smacking of *The Reader's Digest,* this is a sensible treatise stressing the usefulness of traditional virtues: courage, honesty, forgiveness, responsibility, persistence, and patience. Problems arise, of course, when the absence of these qualities is pathological, and Dr Andrews's moral life-raft out of reach.

Pather Panchali: Song of the Road. By BIBHUTIBHUSHAN BANERJI. Translated by T. W. CLARK and TARAPADA MUKHERJI. Lockamaya Press (8 Batoum Gardens, London W6 7 QD), £4.95.

Welcome reprint, from a new publishing house, of the magnificent novel on which Satyajit Ray based his first, fine, and precariously made film: a Bengali village family seen through the children's eyes of Opu (in the film "Apu") and his older sister.

Hope and Glory. By JOHN BOORMAN. Faber, £4.95.

The script (but not the final cut) of Boorman's eponymous film, prefaced by a long, revealing, nostalgic essay about the London wartime childhood events it depicts, and followed by a brief account of the production difficulties, plus evocative black-and-white stills. Writing and direction suit him equally well.

Letters to Thinkers: Further Thoughts on Lateral Thinking. By EDWARD DE BONO. Harrap, £12.95.

Reprints of thirty circulars previously issued to (mainly business) subscribers, between 1982 and 1984. As in previous books, de Bono's concern is with practical and productive thinking—creative wrinkles—not controversy or philosophy. The tone is sometimes pat; the fascinating anecdotes sometimes repeat each other with disconcerting variations: but it's an instructive package.

Comrades. By BILL DOUGLAS. Faber, £3.95.

Another Faber film-script, this time without essay material: the story, schematically told, of the 19th-century Tolpuddle "martyrs", deported to Australian penal colonies for swearing an illegal oath (but really for forming a legal farmworkers' trade union). Based on the final cut, the script follows it in underplaying national protest and muddling the individual stories overseas.

Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War. Edited by MICHAEL I. HANDEL. Frank Cass, £25.00, $35.00; paper, £15.00, $18.50.

No "How we fooled the Nazis" pot-boiler, but the proceedings of an international conference at the US Army War College in April 1986. Klaus-Jürgen Müller of Hamburg and the University of the Bundeswehr questions the worth of some Allied scams, notably "Fortitude North"; and John P. Campbell of McMaster University is critical of "Starkey": but the editor (from the War College) and notably Thomas L. Cubbage (formerly in Military Intelligence) vindicate many other operations.

The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline. By ROBERT HEWISON. Methuen, £6.95.

The author, a Ruskin scholar, critic, social historian of the arts, and chronicler of the Cambridge "Footlights", here lambastes the current British tendency to confuse concern for the past of the mother country with mummification. We-ell: "heritage" prettification can be overdone; but so can the attack on it. How else do we ward off the vandals?

Bodyshock: The Truth about Changing Sex. By LIZ HODGKINSON. Columbus Books, £5.95.

Sympathetic and unsensational treatment of a subject far older than current surgical and chemical practices. The author is married and the mother of two teen-age sons; but she sensitively conveys the frustration, unease, and eventual relief of successful transsexual refugees—in both directions.

George Blake: Superspy. By H. MONTGOMERY HYDE. Constable, £12.95.

Rather routine retelling of the George Blake (or Behar) story, relying mainly on Seán Bourke's problematic testimony, and accusing two only faintly pseudonymous members of CND's Committee of 100 of having organised and financed Blake's escape from Wormwood Scrubs. Would the case stand up in court?

Why Humans Vary In Intelligence. By SEYMOUR W. ITZKOFF. Paideia Publishers (P.O. Box 343, Ashfield, Massachusetts 01330, USA), $18.00.

A very puzzling book. Professor Itzkoff maintains that "the nature/nurture controversy has been resolved, at least for this portion of historical time, on the side of nature". He also derides politically motivated *pudeur* about group IQ differences. But then he advances vast unverifiable theories about the inheritance of intelligence over prehistoric time-scales. Racism?

The Shape of English: Structure and History. By ROGER LASS. Dent, £30.00.

A magnificently detailed, observant, and often original technical account of the language, tracing not only its past, its phonology, its morphosyntax, and some of its dialects, but also divergences now becoming pronounced. A glossary helps laymen; but this lay reader still can't distinguish [k^h] as in *cat* from [k] as in *scat*. Can you?

A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane. By ROY PORTER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

The author, Senior Lecturer in the Social History of Medicine at the Wellcome Institute, has tried to write about "madness" from the "mad" person's viewpoint, leaning on the researches of D. A. Paterson, and sympathising but not identifying with the polemical views of Thomas S. Szasz. The result is illuminating and compassionate, but somewhat inconclusive, save in its indictment of "sane" self-confidence.

Going to Miami: Exiles, Tourists and Refugees in the New America. By DAVID RIEFF. Bloomsbury, £12.95.

"Miami advice" might be this book's alternative subtitle Sensible counsel: read it before going anywhere near southern Florida, speculative rich retirement resort now transformed by drugs, immigration, and trippers. David Rieff, himself a Bostonian, Princeton graduate, and New York publisher, writes about this urban smorgasbord as if he were a visiting Englishman.

Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life. By CLAIRE TOMALIN. Viking, £14.95.

Cool, crisp, perceptive account of a life some may have thought sufficiently explored by Jeffrey Meyers and Antony Alpers (and sufficiently exploited by Middleton Murry). But Mrs Tomalin adds some plangent grace-notes, notably on the venereal infection and later blackmail supplied by Floryan Sobienowski, but also on other, less harmful friendships.

Memory. By MARY WARNOCK. Faber, £11.95.

Scholarly companion-piece to Baroness Warnock's *Imagination*, in whose subject memory plays so tortuous a part. Long reflection, wide reading, careful introspection—all contribute. Unlike Sheridan's victim, the author owes her facts to her memory and her wit to her imagination.

Miscarriages of Justice. By BOB WOFFINDEN. Hodder & Stoughton, £14.95.

Ploddingly written case-histories, including the Rillington Place and A6 murders, and devoting much space to the Guildford and Woolwich pub-bomb affairs. The author claims that "the continued incarceration of the innocent is nothing less than national policy". Come, now. Still, more could be done—perhaps by inquisitorial rather than adversarial justice.

R.M.

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The Problems of Being Rajiv

Letter from India—By EDWARD BEHR

INDIAN POLITICIANS don't fly to Delhi to see their leader—they "airdash". Male students don't harass girls—they "eve-tease". In all sorts of ways, 40 years after independence, Indian English differs from the clipped, Oxbridge-accented language left behind by that small super-caste of élite British Administrators, the Indian Civil Service.

It's still the only *lingua franca*. In Madras once, forgetting I was in the south, I spoke to a taxi-driver in Hindi—India's official language, but used only in the north. "What for", he shouted angrily, "you are addressing me in this colonial language? . . ." When the time came for Rajiv Gandhi to take his oath as Prime Minister after his mother's assassination, he intoned in English, in a soft-spoken, unmistakable Cambridge voice, "*I, Rajiv Gandhi, do solemnly swear. . . .*"

Rajiv's problems, arising out of that oath, are front-page news all over the world. Three years ago, "Camelot" was at hand; he and his beautiful Italian-born wife, Sonia, were giving a credible imitation of JFK and Jackie; and the country's expectations were sky-high. Today he is fighting for his political life, his ruling Congress (Indira) Party in mutinous disarray, with five of his closest former aides determined to force him out of office. A recent poll showed that 40% of all Indians believed he personally took money in the Bofors deal, the $1.3 billion howitzer contract which caused such a storm that Rajiv had to get up in Parliament and do a humiliating neo-Nixon-"I-am-not-a-crook" act.

His opponents allege that he is politically inept and a liar, with his mother's guile (but none of her political "savvy" and her instinct for the jugular), and all the arrogance of his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru (with none of the latter's intellect or statesmanship). Rajiv's real predicament, I suspect, is not political but psychological, linked to a shaky sense of identity and a feeling of insecurity arising out of his cultural and social background.

The man is still strikingly handsome. His jowls may be fleshier, his hair thinner, and his waist thicker than when he took office (the waist, maybe, because of the bullet-proof vest he has to wear at all times). But he remains appealingly boyish yet imposing, relaxed (except for sudden, unpredictable flashes of rage), and, in public at least, completely unruffled. He handles the charges of political ineptitude and corruption with detached, almost amused, disdain. You nearly believe him when he says he feels sorry for his critics.

His is the innate superiority of the Kashmiri Brahmin, who by definition can do no wrong. For all his recent ordeals, he still clearly enjoys belonging to that super-privileged hereditary caste, the Nehru dynasty, with its divinely ordained right to rule India. But beneath the veneer of self-confidence and the bluster there is, I suspect, baffled anger and confusion. For Rajiv—the most modern-minded Prime Minister independent India has ever had—was completely unprepared to rule a sub-continent with 800 million people, 16 main languages, 6 religions and a socio-economic structure that runs from primitive aborigines to some of the world's most eminent mathematicians and nuclear scientists.

The culture he grew up in was overwhelmingly European. The reality he faces is not. E. M. Forster would have had a lot of fun with this new "Passage to India", involving not innocent English visitors in conflict with a colonialist establishment and an immutable Orient, but a highly Westernised Indian political leader caught up in the contradictions and complexities of a country he neither fully understands nor masters. The rival pulls between East and West, and the inability of this personally charming, intelligent 43-year-old to cope with them explain why in the space of three years "Camelot" became "Rajivgate".

NOT THAT Rajiv is unaware of his Anglo-Indian duality. He has always spoken English at home (he gets by in Italian with Sonia), but to this day his Hindi is very much a foreign

EDWARD BEHR, *a contributing editor of "Newsweek" and formerly their European cultural correspondent, has, as a foreign correspondent based in Paris since 1957, also worked for Reuters, "Time", and "The Saturday Evening Post". His books include "Bearings" (Viking, 1978)—published in England (Hamish Hamilton, 1981) as "Anyone Here Been Raped and Speaks English?"—and most recently a study of Henry Pu Yi, "The Last Emperor" (Bantam, New York; Macdonald/Futura, London, 1987).*

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tongue. He feels so strongly that this must somehow be atoned for that he never appears in public except in traditional Indian dress. The shorts, jeans, and Guy Lacoste shirts that he changes into in private are kept strictly out of sight, reserved for the home which few outsiders ever see, inside the highly fortified family compound on Racecourse Road. So are the classical records, the hi-fi specialist magazines, and the Hollywood film cassettes.

The result is sometimes comical (*kurta* with Ray Bans, homespun *khaddi* with Montblanc pen and gold Rolex watch) but always significant. Here is someone trying to be both Indian and Western at the same time, and occasionally failing to convince in either role.

"He's aloof from the mainstream of Indian society, a product of his class", said Suman Dubey, a close friend and contemporary of Rajiv's both at the Doon School (the British Public-School clone in Dehra Dun, where Rajiv was a boarder), and at Trinity College, Cambridge (where he stayed for two years, reading Engineering, but without taking a degree).

Rajiv's friends and the first group of close advisers came from a very narrow, highly Westernised circle, and quickly became known as "the Doon School mafia". Not all of them had been there, but, if not Doon School, they were "family". Arun Nehru, his burly, ambitious cousin, was the former head of a decrepit British-owned paint firm which he had turned around and made into a model of marketing efficiency. Arun Singh, also a successful *box-wallah*, is the son of the aristocratic ex-Maharajah of Kapurthala. Romi Chopra, an intimate since the Doon School days, was a successful advertising executive. Satish Sharma, who overnight found himself catapulted into the job of personal *chef de cabinet* (controlling access to Rajiv, and therefore enormously powerful in his own right), owed his job simply to the fact that he had been Rajiv's Indian Airlines co-pilot, shared the same interests in cars and flying, and, like Rajiv, had a foreign wife (Stella, handsome, lively, Dutch, and the owner of a successful Delhi fashion boutique).

The choice of Sharma surprised even Rajiv's closest friends, for this bluff Indian Biggles had no political experience at all. It showed how much personal friendships and shared experiences meant to Rajiv, and was an almost pathetic admission of his isolation, of how few people of stature he really knew, or trusted.

THE OTHER DOMINANT FIGURE in Rajiv's brains trust was also a lifelong friend—better known in India than Rajiv himself. Amitabh Bachchan, India's most famous film star, practically grew up with Rajiv. In Allahabad, their home town, the two families were very close (Amitabh's father, a professor at Allahabad University, had been an intimate friend of Indira Gandhi; later he was to teach Hindi to Sonia). Amitabh, unlike the run-of-the-mill Indian film-actor, himself began as a *box-wallah* in advertising, before becoming a star. India is a movie-mad country, and a Robert Redford and Rudolph Valentino rolled into one was a natural political asset: Rajiv talked Amitabh into standing as a Congress (I) candidate for Allahabad; he won with a huge majority, without seriously having to campaign, on the strength of his enormous fan following. Later, Rajiv bitterly regretted bringing Amitabh Bachchan into politics; but, as one intimate put it to me: "It seemed a good idea at the time."

The political novice became a constant visitor to Racecourse Road, and Cabinet Ministers complained that he had more access to Rajiv than they did. In December 1986, just before the Bofors storm broke, Rajiv, Amitabh Bachchan, their wives and some of Sonia's relatives flew to the Andaman Islands for a secluded vacation.

IN HIS December 1984 election campaign, Rajiv hammered away at two main themes: the need for India to modernise, and the need to clean up public life. India's small (50 million) but growing, consumer-minded, newspaper-reading, Westernised middle class heartily agreed with him, and voted for him *en masse*. The December 1984 landslide came from a combination of urban middle-class and traditional Congress voters—the illiterate, rural millions for whom Rajiv, like Indira Gandhi before him and Pandit Nehru before her, was the modern incarnation of "Rajaji", the mythical lord and master.

Both Nehru and Indira, in their time, had worked out an unspoken but highly effective formula for ruling India, taking votes from the poor and money from the middle-class industrialists, using the trappings of democracy and a docile bureaucracy to mask their almost untrammelled autocratic power. The magic could have worked for Rajiv too, the third dynast in line, especially in the emotional aftermath of Indira's brutal murder. But he didn't know India well enough to perpetuate the system. Within months, he alienated the poor (his was "a rich man's government", they said), the bureaucrats (by pushing them too hard), and the newspaper-reading middle class (incensed at charges of corruption).

From the moment he became Prime Minister, Rajiv flew blind. Not that there wasn't room for reform, even at the most remote village level. In the last few years of her "reign", Indira became withdrawn, unpredictable, subject to bouts of mysticism; and her once masterly political instincts began to desert her. She had surrounded herself with abject, second-rate yes-men, astrologers, shady businessmen, Yoga Institute franchisers who imported shotguns on the side. Rajiv and his "Doon School mafia" made a clean sweep of them, along with most of her long-standing Civil Service advisers. The bad old days, Rajiv implied (but without ever criticising his mother directly), were over. He became "Mr Clean", "Mr Computer". Slavishly imitating Rajiv's new fad, many of his rich supporters acquired personal computers. These stand unused today in hundreds of living-rooms, alongside the effigies of more conventional Hindu household deities—obsolete religious offerings to Rajiv, the god that failed.

"Rajiv hadn't actually run anything before becoming Prime Minister", said Aroon Purie, editor of the influential fortnightly *India Today*. Because of this inexperience, and the hereditary Nehru arrogance, Rajiv adopted a brusque, high-handed form of decision-making, that brooked neither ar-

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gument nor debate. "It was: 'Do this. Do that. I don't want to hear any excuses or objections'", a now retired chief bureaucrat told me. The officials responded, most of them, in characteristically Indian fashion, taking advantage of bureaucratic inertia to bury Rajiv's initiatives in a welter of paperwork and buck-passing. Many of his much-publicised reforms fell by the wayside. Whenever Rajiv discovered what was happening, he flew into a rage. "His expectations of the bureaucracy were exaggerated", said a close adviser.

Rajiv fired or transferred hundreds of senior civil servants and scores of ministers. The demoralised bureaucrats started treating him as a natural enemy, especially after his dismissal of the External Affairs Secretary, A. P. Venkateswaran, apparently on the spur of the moment, in the middle of a televised press conference. Rajiv's methods at times reminded one critic of Evelyn Waugh's novel *Black Mischief*—with Rajiv as Seth, the naive, ruthlessly modern innovator, and his "Doon School" advisers in the role of Basil Seal.

Because of the "Raja cult" and the blanket coverage on state-owned Indian TV, whose subservience contrasts so sharply with India's free and irreverent press, Rajiv's tiny failings were magnified. Conscious of his poise, his looks, and the reverence he knows he inspires in the masses, he feels immune from ridicule. But there was an embarrassing moment in Bengal recently, during a local election rally. Determined to get the Bengali crowd to chant some Congress (I) slogans, he misguidedly decided to address them in Bengali, a complex language which he hardly knows. He had not rehearsed with his local subordinates. "First I want to do it with the women", he called out. There was an appalled silence. Without realising it, he had used a phrase full of sexual innuendo.

This was a minor matter, but it revealed the same overconfident, slapdash complacency that characterised more serious problem-solving attempts.

Indira Gandhi had been murdered by two Sikh bodyguards, late converts to the notion of "Khalistan", an independent Sikh state in the Punjab, after she had ordered the Indian Army into Amritsar's Golden Temple, a "Khalistan" stronghold turned into an armed camp.

Thousands of Sikhs died during the assault and the repression in the Punjab that followed, and thousands more were to die at the hands of enraged Hindus after Indira's murder. Rajiv's most urgent task was to negotiate concessions with Sikh moderates that would lead to lasting peace.

What he did was incredibly short-sighted. Rushing headlong into an agreement with Harchand Singh Longowal, the moderate Sikh leader, Rajiv promised the Sikhs a number of major concessions. He was so impatient, so eager for quick results, that he failed to prepare the ground, or to make sure that he could deliver. Experts were not consulted—because of the objections he knew they would raise. Rajiv knew best, and besides, how could anyone fail to obey a Nehru dynast?

Longowal was murdered shortly afterwards; the politicians in the neighbouring Hindu-majority state of Haryana wrecked the Rajiv-Longowal accords by refusing to go along with them; and the whole deal collapsed. There is more Sikh terrorism in India today than there was before the storming of the Golden Temple. The Sikhs remain convinced that Rajiv never really meant to make concessions in the first place, and they hate him even more than they hated Indira. He and his family are now at the top of the Sikh terrorists' hit-list. Rajiv, Sonia, and their two teen-age children are probably the most closely guarded family in the world.

Rajiv was certainly well-intentioned, but, according to the editor of *India Today*, "He behaved like a pilot—he thought that because you press a button, something automatically happens. . . ."

Nehru would have acted differently, probably risking a dramatic visit to the Punjab, making an emotional speech to the Sikhs, deploring the consequences of "Operation Bluestar" (the Indian Army code-name for the storming of the Golden Temple), appealing for forgiveness, and saying that he understood what it meant to be a Sikh in these troubled, hostile times. Rajiv chose to learn a different lesson: namely, that nothing could happen in India without the approval of the powerful local Congress bosses. It was a measure of his combined inexperience and petulance, swinging from one extreme to the other, that he now believed their price could never be too high.

The result was the Shah Banu affair, a *cause célèbre* that marked the start of his decline.

Shah Banu, a destitute Muslim woman, had sued her husband all the way up to the Supreme Court for support after he had divorced her under Muslim (*Shariat*) law after 45 years of marriage and five children. The Court decided she should get 50 rupees (about $5) a month. The Union Muslim League, a highly conservative body and Congress (I) vote-getter, claimed that this contravened Muslim family law in India. Rajiv's junior Home Minister, Arif Mohammad Khan, himself a Muslim, urged Rajiv to stand firm. How could aid to a destitute woman, he argued, be against *Shariat*?

But elections were about to take place in Assam, where Rajiv badly needed the Muslim vote—and Union Muslim League support. So he made a deal with the League, allowing a bill to be passed in Parliament which removed all Muslims from the jurisdiction of the civil courts in family matters. Arif resigned in disgust, and is now one of the "gang of five", the ex-Congress leaders determined to topple Rajiv. And Congress lost the Assam elections anyway.

The public's attitude towards Rajiv today, Arif Khan told me, "is one of a man standing for nothing but falling for everything". As Arif Khan foresaw, the surrender to the League encouraged extreme Hindu groups to start putting pressure on Rajiv too. Hindu-Muslim relations have soured sharply as a result; Rajiv has lost virtually all the Muslim vote; and, over the last year, clashes between Hindus and Muslims have become regular and bloody.

Even during Rajiv's "Camelot" period, there was an ominous example of the store he misguidedly set on personal friendship. During his visit to Washington in 1985, Rajiv

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asked the Americans for a very special favour. One of the Nehru dynasty's most faithful family retainers and political hit-men had been Mohamed Yunus, who became Indira Gandhi's right-hand man during her Emergency Rule (1975-77). His son, Shariyar, had been sentenced to a long jail sentence in the US for a large drug-smuggling operation. Shortly after Rajiv's trip, President Reagan signed a Presidential pardon for him. "What can Reagan have thought of that request, and what respect can he have had for Rajiv after that?" asked Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's surviving sister and, at 87, still a formidable critic of Rajiv's rule.

THESE WERE straws in the wind. The real crisis came in 1987 with a series of revelations of commissions paid to middlemen in West German submarine and Swedish Bofors arms contracts, leading to a revolt by Rajiv's former aides and the withdrawal of a great deal of popular grassroots support. Again, it was his failure to perceive the extent of the threat against him and the inept way in which he reacted to it, rather than the nature of the allegations themselves, that led to the formidable cabal against him.

Fund-raising has always been the Congress Party's most important activity. During Nehru's "*Quit India!*" movement of the 1930s, practically every bullock-cart owner had to pay Congress a few annas. During World War II, building contractors were discreetly held to ransom on a large scale. After Independence, an increasingly greedy Congress turned to the big landlords and growing business houses.

Sanjay Gandhi, Indira's younger son, and her favourite—he died in 1980 in an air crash, at the controls of his private plane (a gift from one of his mother's business cronies)—altered the system. Aware of the dangers of becoming too dependent on Indian big business, he began levying far more lucrative commissions on India's foreign purchases, through trusted intermediaries.

The new fund-raising ventures inevitably gave rise to rumours—unverified, but believed by most diplomats—that Indira Gandhi had herself squirrelled away money for the family in Swiss banks. When Sanjay's plane crashed, she visited the scene twice. The rumour spread that she had come to retrieve Sanjay's watch, and that on the back of it was a Swiss bank account number known only to him.

For a long time, Rajiv was unaware of this particular rumour, and when he heard it he was profoundly shocked. The modern, reformist part of him genuinely wanted a Congress clean-up, although without realising its implications; and on several occasions he publicly attacked Congress leadership. The patrician in him hated the grubby, second-rate, but immensely powerful ward-heeling operators (so unlike his smart friends) who ran the Congress party machine. Typical of the Tammany Hall bosses were people like R. H. K. Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler, Cabinet Ministers with abysmal reputations, with a huge following of Delhi slum-dwellers and thugs who were only too happy to beat up Sikhs or take part in "rentacrowds" in return for a square meal or immunity from prosecution in petty crime.

Rajiv tolerated these local bosses, relied on them, even promoted them, while treating them with complete contempt. But money is power where Congress (Indira) is concerned, for it has no ideology left, and no starry-eyed rank-and-file volunteers willing to work for nothing. How could Rajiv bear to have people like Bhagat and Tytler around him?, I asked. "They're vote-banks", was the answer.

Nothing causes more hilarity among educated Indians than the spectacle of politicians like Bhagat and Tytler paying lip-service to Gandhian ideals of poverty and honesty in public life; they know not only that Congress is riddled with corruption but that without corruption it would cease to exist.

There was no one around Rajiv to point out these contradictions, just as there was no one, until Sonia stepped in, to warn him that not all his so-called friends were what they seemed. Of course, he was partly to blame, for his Nehru arrogance was compounded by naivety: until recently, he simply could not believe that, behind his back, his close advisers might be taking advantage of him, might even be setting him up, or that there might be other candidates for the "Raja cult".

THE FIRST TO challenge Rajiv was V. P. Singh, his former Finance Minister, the ascetic, maverick moralist who talked out openly about corruption in high places in the inner circle and on commissions paid in the submarine contract. It was V. P. Singh, after resigning from the Cabinet, who began to lead the baying pack demanding a full enquiry into beneficiaries of the Bofors deal. Scarcely coincidentally, he was himself the adopted son of an ex-Maharajah, and the crowds had started to call him "Rajaji".

Then there was Arun Nehru. His great-grandfather and Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's father, had been brothers, so his dynastic claim—as a potential rival to Rajiv—was valid. It was Sonia who first told Rajiv of the traitor in their midst; but Rajiv, who had found Arun intimidating and difficult to deal with directly, waited until he was immobilised by a serious heart-attack to fire him from the Cabinet. Nehru promptly joined the V. P. Singh bandwagon.

"The Doon School mafia" was in any case falling apart. What had begun as a pleasant group of like-minded people soon degenerated into a clique of intriguing courtiers, each trying to get closest to Rajiv and vilifying the others. "The competition was nauseating", a former member of the group told me. Satish Sharma was demoted to handling Rajiv's constituency affairs after an embarrassing story appeared about him in the Indian press: he had imported huge quantities of Italian tiles for the swimming-pool he was building at his farmhouse, and the media wondered where his sudden wealth had come from.

Arun Singh, Rajiv's most trusted aide, resigned "on personal grounds", actually to protest at the way Rajiv had handled the Bofors scandal. (Shortly before this happened, Sonia quarrelled with Arun Singh's wife, and they are no longer on speaking terms. None of the members of Rajiv's entourage will talk about the rift, and the bazaar rumours are too libellous to print.)

Arun Singh and Amitabh Bachchan fell out with each

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other. This had to do not only with Bachchan's undue influence over Rajiv, but with Arun Singh's renting Bachchan his farmhouse near Delhi. When Arun Singh wanted it back, Bachchan procrastinated, and then, when he did clear out, Arun Singh complained he had left it in terrible condition, proving once more that one should only rent one's home to strangers.

But Amitabh Bachchan soon had far more on his mind, for the media began investigating his brother's financial affairs in Switzerland. As a result, after misleading Parliament and being caught out in verifiable untruths, he had to resign his seat. The Bachchan brothers repeatedly used their friendship with Rajiv to try to keep both the media and the bureaucracy at bay: but at length even Rajiv could no longer protect them. Far too late in the day, he ordered an investigation into the affairs of Ajitabh Bachchan, Amitabh's younger brother, who is also his business manager. Relations between Amitabh and Rajiv have cooled, and Rajiv no longer takes Amitabh's calls. The scandal has hurt India's superstar badly, for many of his fans have turned against him.

The fans have turned against Rajiv, too, and he still cannot understand it. The Racecourse Road bunker, with 1,400 crack "Black Cat" commandos on permanent duty to protect Rajiv and Sonia, has become their psychological bunker as well. (Ironically, there are more police in Delhi today than there were in the whole of unpartitioned, pre-Independence India.) Rajiv and Sonia are appalled by what they see as treachery among their friends, and the inexplicable, venomous hatred whipped up by former supporters. They are thin-skinned enough to be genuinely hurt by the cruel jokes at their expense.

RAJIV'S ONE MAJOR international triumph, his peace-making role in Sri Lanka, was mocked even before it turned sour, the high Indian Army casualties threatening India with a Viet-Nam-type quagmire. He had sent crack Indian troops to keep the peace in the north between Tamils and Buddhists, in return for autonomy rule in the Tamil majority areas, but the Tamil Tigers turned out to be a far more formidable guerrilla force than Rajiv and his military advisers had foreseen. "Outside a battalion", his opponents said, "inside an Italian."

Sonia has done her best to adapt, wearing saris and speaking fluent Hindi, but she teeters on the brink of a serious breakdown: she cannot stand the hypocrisy of Indians who fawn on the ruling family to their face and mock them behind their backs. She lives in fear that Sikh extremists will one day strike, if not against Rajiv, then against her teen-age children.

One of the most persistent rumours is that, with a percentage of under-the-table commissions, the Gandhis and Sonia's family, the Mauros, have accumulated huge wealth in Italy. "It's so stupid", Sonia said. "Money can't buy security."

What angers and puzzles Rajiv most about his new beleaguered status is the way his wife has become a victim of Indian vendettas. "He genuinely believes there's a plot to get her", said one close friend. This explains Rajiv's mounting paranoia. Ever since the campaign against him started, he has fallen back on his mother's trick of accusing "outside forces" (the CIA; or Pakistan) of "destabilising" India. The charges have mostly fallen flat, and are "a measure of the dilemma he's in". But he has temporarily silenced the influential New Delhi edition of his shrillest newspaper critic, the *Indian Express*, through a mixture of court actions and crippling strikes which the editor, Arun Shourie, says are government-inspired. Rajiv is also outraged by the way some of his close friends have used their Rajiv connections to further their own interests behind his back. One reason why Rajiv failed to react to stories of the Bachchans' financial dealings is that he assumed for a long time that these were merely part of a "smear campaign" against anyone close to him.

The terrorist threat has affected Sonia most—she can no longer do most of the things she once enjoyed. Once she used to swim in the Oberoi Hotel pool, but sniper risks are now too great, and there is no swimming-pool in the Racecourse Road bunker. Nor can she go to the antique shops in the Sunder Nagar market. She and Rajiv rarely go out; when they do, whole neighbourhoods have to be cordoned off, and hundreds of "Black Cat" commandos disrupt traffic.

With their lives under constant scrutiny, the most innocent relaxation is criticised. Recently, they accepted an invitation to dinner at a friend's house. There was some dancing: the living-room was turned into a disco. The next day, all over India, rumours spread that while victims of Sikh terrorism were being massacred in the Punjab, Rajiv and Sonia were attending "wild parties". In fact, Rajiv works an 18-hour day, often starting at 6 a.m. and ending long after dinner. "He has to keep sane somehow", said a member of his shrinking circle, "and one way to escape the pressures around him is to see the friends he knew before all this started."

At such informal gatherings, everyone calls him "Rajiv", and the fiction is that he's just one of the boys. The talk is of hi-fi stereo equipment (about which he knows a lot), movies, music. Sonia loves opera; both enjoy Rajiv's collection of classical records, and they sometimes watch films on video cassettes. Rajiv is a skilled amateur photographer, and endeared himself to India's local press photographers by lifting India's huge import tax on cameras. It is a gauge of the appallingly cumbersome Indian bureaucracy that such a simple measure took months to get past the paper-pushers, and required Rajiv's repeated intervention.

If anything, things are worse for the children. "For them, it's like being in prison", said Mrs Pandit. "They get nervy, depressed." It's too dangerous for them to go to school, and they rarely see friends of their own age. Every trip outside Racecourse Road becomes a major security exercise. Both teenagers, sick of their "goldfish-bowl" existence, are beginning to hate the country that makes normal life impossible for them.

ONE OF THE REASONS why Rajiv feels outraged by the growing coalition against him (an uneasy alliance of Marxist-Leninists on the extreme Left and some maverick Right-wing Hindu groups) is that, by focusing on his alleged financial scandals and the way he has shielded his friends, they have diverted attention from India's real problems. Rajiv is a

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passionate conservationist, well aware that only tough measures can save India's vanishing forests. He badly wants to do something about pollution, which is destroying not only India's wild-life but also its rivers and forests. He was enraged when, after facing packed houses in Parliament in full pursuit of his alleged financial misdemeanours, only some 60 MPs bothered to turn up to discuss measures to fight the 1987 drought—the worst in 80 years. "He feels hemmed in", said one close associate. "No one else seems to take the problem seriously."

In Rajiv's beleaguered state, he knows that he depends far too much on the "Tammany Hall bosses" to expect their backing for the conservationist measures which in the short term would make the poor Indian peasants even poorer. Part of his dream for India was not only its modernisation, but the transformation of its parched landscape. He now knows that it will not happen in his lifetime, and that the impact of the drought will be felt for generations to come. "He's learning to live with all this", said a friend, "but it's turning him into a different kind of person."

Because he feels so threatened, and so unfairly singled out, Rajiv for a time stopped giving interviews, except to the maverick Leftist *Blitz*, India's version of a Left-wing *National Enquirer*, which front-paged a "CIA plot" against him that turned out to be a clumsy fake. He has started courting Congress back-benchers for the first time, belatedly realising that he needs their help; but he fully trusts no one except Sonia.

"I've learned a lot", Rajiv says, sadly. But, like his mother, he is a fighter. "The name of the game", he tells his depleted inner circle, "is survival." And indeed, writing off Rajiv may turn out to be as premature as writing off Indira Gandhi after she lost the 1977 elections. It remains an open question whether anyone but a member of the Nehru dynasty, however flawed, can rule the whole of India for very long.

Oxford, 1940s

Then I was "Mother's Help—Lady's Companion",
A teen-age girl in love with fantasies
Walking the wartime Oxford streets and lanes.

The colleges were locked façades to me
Quite out of bounds with military use
But still regarded with romantic awe

As territories one day to be explored
By one who'd shed the enemy alien skin.
Meanwhile there were the books—some treasured

Second-hand, picked up at Blackwell's for a song.
An early Schnitzler with the spine in shreds
And hinted sex in dashes worming through

To savour secretly. Before permissiveness.
Long, lonely afternoons up Shotover,
The hill that took me past an empty church

I sometimes entered, praying in my search
For something new and weatherproof
But never found. Years looking for a clue.

A cleric gave a lecture, gaunt, severe,
On faith, a Puritan of sorts, a Scot
Who sent me down a draughty corridor

A mile or two. Not very far. *Macbeth*
Came to the theatre and filled my head,
My bones and bloodstream ever since, the breath

Of witches stoking up my words. A flame
As permanent as air. And British
Restaurants would earn their wholesome name

With calories that lined my ribs. US
Canteens were treasure troves that sometimes
Spilled their gems. And war was somewhere else.

Lotte Kramer

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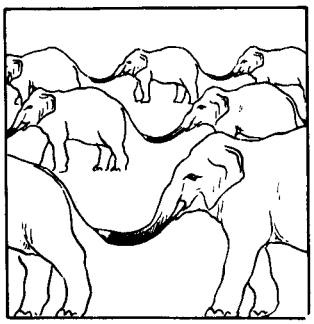
CONTROVERSY

Between Revolt & Rancour

On Contemporary British Drama—By TIMOTHY KIDD



THE NEW artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company recently gave an interview to the press. In the course of it, Terry Hands disclosed that about ten years ago he had been on the point of leaving both the theatre and the country:

> "I had grown tired and fed up of that peculiarly English disease of always knocking and putting down and undervaluing whatever was done or achieved, both inside and outside the theatre."[1]

Coming from a leading figure of the subsidised theatre, this struck me as an extraordinarily revealing statement. For if one had to nominate a single area of British life which was particularly characterised by envy, rancour, and a general hostility to existing British society and its institutions, then surely the subsidised theatre would be a strong candidate. Examples of this kind of attitude are too numerous to mention, and stretch back to the crack of doom—or at least until 1956, which for the modern British theatre amounts to the same thing. (I have often thought that *Look Forward in Anger* would have been a more appropriate title for John Osborne's inaugural work.) So a few recent specimens will have to serve.

In the past few years we have seen *Pravda* (National Theatre, 1985) attacking journalists and politicians; *Serious Money* (Royal Court, 1987) castigating City businessmen and politicians; and *Fashion* (RSC, 1987) hitting out at advertising men and politicians. In this type of drama, politicians are invariably shown as both ineffectual and corrupt; this keeps the playwright safe from having to endorse any realistic programme of action. But in truth no one is spared. The law, the police, the armed forces, the Foreign Office, the business world, commerce and industry . . . all are shown as irredeemably rotten. Plays like *Destiny, Top Girls, An Honourable Trade, Plenty*—the titles are supposed to be witheringly sarcastic—portray modern British society as ineffably duplicitous, self-seeking, and inane.

A worried playgoer might conclude that the sole repository of national virtue was to be found in the subsidised theatre. But such a conclusion would be premature, for the indignation is highly selective.

There is little sign of the flow ceasing. Political travesties of classic drama and tendentious versions of history gush from the subsidised tap. In the current repertoire of the RSC, we find *Romeo and Juliet* conscripted for an assault on Western consumer-capitalism, complete with giant dummies of Reagan, Thatcher, and Kohl. An adaptation of a French novel written in 1781 ends with the brandishing of the revolutionary tricolour, the clang of the guillotine, and a heavy elbow in the ribs for the audience: "A new year tomorrow and more than half-way through the eighties already. I dare say we would not be wrong to look forward to whatever the nineties may bring. . . ."

Down at the RSC Pit, a new play about the painter William Hogarth is entitled *The Art of Success*. According to the publicity material, "the would-be artist tries to reconcile his appetite for sex and money with the demands of his conscience. . . ." Several critics found themselves wondering why the playwright should have chosen to write about Hogarth, Fielding, and Sir Robert Walpole, since (as one of them put it) "he seems to have embarked on the project with so little understanding of any of them".[2]

Anyone with a longer acquaintance with the subsidised theatre could have enlightened him. Indeed the playwright himself does so:

> "*The Art of Success* is set in the past, but it is not a history play. This allows me to take on emotive arguments with a degree of detachment."[3]

In other words, what we have here is a covert attack on the "success ethic" of modern Britain. An ethic of failure is greatly to be preferred, except of course when it comes to distributing rewards to committed playwrights. The play ends with Hogarth taking Polaroid snaps of his wife in a variety of obscene poses. Art without social commitment must, we infer, inevitably degenerate into pornography.

Five years ago, the RSC mounted a glossy and extremely expensive Leftist pantomime entitled *Poppy* (1982). It took the Opium Wars as its subject, but much of it was devoted to

[1] Terry Hands, *Evening Standard*, 2 June 1987.
[2] Francis King, *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 August 1987.
[3] Nick Dear, programme note, August 1987.

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jeering at the whole history of the British Empire and of free trade, with contemporary sideswipes at the recent victory in the Falklands War and at the economic prosperity of Hong Kong ("It's Milton Friedman's favourite place!"). The director of this lavish production? None other than Terry Hands.

Certainly, one important function of the drama is to criticise its own society and the history upon which it is founded. No one would wish a theatre of complacency to replace the theatre of rancour. Modern British drama has major achievements to its credit, including those in the social drama. One might instance the early plays of Arnold Wesker or John Arden; the commitment of the Royal Court Theatre to social realism; or the modern adaptations of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Les Misérables* by the RSC; and the NT's versions of the Mystery Plays, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, and *Animal Farm*. But viewing the contemporary British theatre as a whole, one perceives a dispiriting uniformity. Almost all of its social critique comes from the same windy direction, much of it sounds exactly, and echoingly, the same, and some of it looks increasingly like posturing rather than genuine conviction.

The first point is agreed upon by every shade of critical opinion. From the Right, Paul Johnson:

> "I suppose we shall have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that our subsidised theatres, especially the Royal Shakespeare and the National, exist mainly to give second-rate playwrights expensive opportunities to peddle left-wing propaganda."[4]

And from the Left, Benedict Nightingale, looking back on his eighteen years as a critic for the *New Statesman*:

> "There's something of a glut of samey, doctrinaire plays about politics. Their hearts are correctly situated, to the Left; but they aren't usually very imaginative. . . . Too often they're drably naturalistic, insular in outlook and, without realising it, condescending to the mass of their fellow-citizens, who are rarely seen as active verbs or nouns in the nominative."[5]

Strikingly, the critics feel it unnecessary to name actual playwrights, since the works are often undistinguishable, the overall conformism so complete—impervious, it seems, to changes in the outside world. Just as those who join weird religious cults help to keep each other crazy, so in the subsidised theatre they help to keep each other Left.

This may explain an increasingly plaintive response, even among liberal-minded critics like John Peter of *The Sunday Times*, who would class himself among "thinking people, interested in real answers to specific questions", and yet was forced to conclude of a recent crop of political drama that it "tells us more about the bad temper of its authors than anything else".[6] Similarly, Francis King of The *Sunday Telegraph* pondered the phenomenon in a year-end survey (28 December 1986) entitled "Why is there so much stage Left?"

> "Reasons that have suggested themselves are that successful playwrights tend to be young, with their powers, or at least their reputations, declining as they grow older; that devotees of 'serious' theatre, as distinct from musicals and television spin-offs, tend also to be young and to come from large towns rather than the more conservative country; and that theatre folk, dedicated to lives of both illusion and pretence, are naturally prone to believe both in Utopian dreams and in sinister conspiracies that frustrate their realisation."

There is much truth in this; but it needs some amplification and qualification. In the first place, most of those who run the subsidised theatre—whether as directors or playwrights—are by no means as young as they once were. Most of them entered the field during its period of immense expansion in the 1960s, and have remained there ever since, embalmed in the attitudes of the era like prawns in aspic. Those entering the field subsequently would have been most unwise to attempt a career in the subsidised theatre unless they were prepared to conform.

Hence the frequent note of nostalgia, especially for the *annus mirabilis* of 1968, which is taken as a reference point in play after play. Perhaps the lengthiest exposition was in David Edgar's *Maydays* (RSC, 1983), a four-hour process of agonising on the theme of "Where Did It All Go Wrong?", concluding that fundamentally it was (mostly) all right. Indeed the RSC verged dangerously on self-parody in its past studio season, with not just one but *two* plays set in the late 1960s. *Real Dreams* (1985) by Trevor Griffiths was about a group of middle-class American terrorists (presumably the Weathermen) who are plotting to blow up a supermarket. Their mission is abortive, but at the end they stand up and make a retrospective affirmation of the faith ("But these are dreams that will not go away. These are *real* dreams. . . ,") followed by a poem from Ho Chi Minh. It was a moment so embarrassing that one wanted to make a fast get-away, or even crawl under the seat—except that the seating in this type of theatre is so puritanically uncomfortable that one could not get underneath it. If the subsidised theatre is to become an old folks' home for the relics of the late 1960s, the least they can do is improve the amenities.

WHICH BRINGS ME to the second reason why the subsidised theatre has so strong an attachment to the Left: that is to say, the money. The huge expansion of the theatre in the past 30 years has been funded almost entirely at the public expense. Indeed, most of the people who run the subsidised theatre have a positively aristocratic disdain for trade. It is instructive to remind ourselves how recently this happened. In January 1959, Peter Brook wrote an article for *Encore* magazine entitled—I am not making this up—"Oh For Empty Seats":

> "National theatres, many of them, of different shapes and sizes, would be part of the answer. Of course, we won't ever get one, because the Government will never spend the money. . . . I would like to see a start made, and the principle established, with one tiny theatre with a hundred seats, even fifty seats, but *subsidised to the hilt*."

[4] *The Spectator*, 11 May 1985.
[5] *New Statesman*, 1 August 1986.
[6] *The Sunday Times*, 23 June 1985.

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Peter Brook was quite mistaken. Within three years, both of our great national companies were established, and a string of smaller studio theatres followed, as well as fringe and regional venues. All were funded wholly or largely by the taxpayer. Has there been much gratitude, or even acknowledgement, from the employed artists who are busy in these places?

A representative figure might be Peter Gill (described in a recent interview as "a grandee in theatre terms"), who has worked at the Royal Court, the Riverside, and now at the National Theatre, both as director and as author of semi-autobiographical plays.

> "I used to think 'It'll take more than Margaret Thatcher to stop people being artists'. Now I find myself wondering 'Why must I live here? Why not go to America, where you can get the same philistinism with better pay?'"[7]

I sometimes wonder what people in the public sector would do if they did not have Margaret Thatcher to blame for everything. Here we have the authentically aggrieved note of those working at the cultural end: someone who does not endorse ever-increasing handouts of the taxpayer's money is labelled a philistine. If a platform is not provided at the public expense for the author's views, that is "censorship". Here, for example, is Michelene Wandor—another playwright who, like Peter Gill, has had a new play open at the National Theatre last summer:

> "There's a conservatism now which produces a climate of censorship. I don't like it."[8]

So heavily has Ms Wandor's own work been censored that it runs to a mere four-and-a-half hours on the main stage of the National Theatre, with a cast of actors numbering seventeen.

This kind of perpetual moaning is characteristic of the subsidised arts generally, and indeed much of the public sector. Anyone who said that their grant was quite sufficient would be letting the side down. The fact that public spending continues to rise, year after year, is scarcely noticed; the demand is always for more. The subsidised theatre has a vested interest in welfarism, and hence in socialism, because that is how they get their money.

IT MAY BE ARGUED with some justice that the commercial theatre has an equally vested interest in capitalism. However, the West End stage has shown itself hospitable to radical drama when it can appeal to a wider audience: witness the well-earned success of Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* or Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. How often does the subsidised theatre have a good word to say about free enterprise? And, after all, no one is obliged to attend *When Did You Last See Your Trousers?*, whereas anyone who does not pay his taxes is liable to end up in prison.

The relationship between the arts and the business world has been more widely explored in recent years, sometimes with fruitful results. Unfortunately, the Left mentality does on occasion seem unable to grasp that actions can have consequences. Soon after the first election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister, the Theatre Royal in Stratford East put on a crude propaganda piece entitled *A Short Sharp Shock* (1980). The poster for the play depicted Mrs Thatcher's head being smashed in with a hammer while her throat was cut with a sickle. One scene in the play showed the ghost of Lord Mountbatten, waving his severed arm and declaring of the Royal Family: "We're just there to be killed—if they can get to us." Another showed the bloodied corpse of Airey Neave, the Conservative MP murdered in Westminster by the IRA, who returns to announce that all the dead are really Communists. Needless to say, this production did not affect the theatre's Arts Council grant for succeeding years. However, when the director approached the local branch of the Midland Bank for a grant recently, he was firmly rebuffed "on the grounds that his theatre was considered anti-Thatcher".[9] He was rather annoyed.

In reality, of course, very few of these people seriously believe that a "fascist Britain" is just around the corner. Very few of them would like to be murdered by terrorists themselves, or would be prepared to live in a totalitarian-socialist state. The stage has always lent itself to posturing, from Sir Fopling Flutter to Howard Brenton.

WAS IT INEVITABLE that the new wave of British drama should end up like this? Certainly the two critics who did most to encourage it have expressed later doubts. In a recent elegiac article, Harold Hobson lamented that "audiences have been conditioned into believing that the essential quality in a good play is its relationship to the economic and social conditions of its day. . . ."[10] And the cynosure of radical chic, Kenneth Tynan, looked back in scorn in 1977 at the archetypal political posing of Peter Brook's *US* (1965), accusing its fabricator of "shallow and factitious pessimism" and of being "a pure master of the theatrical gesture".[11] This may seem rather like Jean Harlow describing Joan Crawford as a loose woman; but the criticism is apt.

What can be blamed on Tynan's influence is the way in which modern British social drama has tended to follow Bertolt Brecht rather than George Bernard Shaw. It is not hard to fathom why. Brecht was a theatrical genius, although his work could be crass, strident, and censorious. Unfortunately, it is the latter qualities that are most easily imitated. To write in a Brechtian manner, you have to be very earnest and very committed. Also very loud, with plain staging, stark lighting, and an acting delivery of the knotted brow and clenched jaw (if not clenched fist) variety. As for the audience, those who come along are hoping to be alienated, and are seldom disappointed.

To write like Shaw, in his better plays, it is necessary to show some signs of wit and indeed intelligence; to be prepared to engage the real world rather than a cartoon; and to

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[7] *City Limits*, 16 July 1987.
[8] *The Guardian*, 30 June 1987.
[9] *Evening Standard*, 20 July 1987.
[10] "Political Slant", *Drama*, vol. 3, 1987.
[11] "Director as Misanthropist", *Theatre Quarterly*, No. 25, Spring 1977.

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offer a dialectic of opposing viewpoints rather than the assertion of a single one. This technique, too, has its dangers, for it does require some talent; the only modern British dramatist who even attempts it seems to be Tom Stoppard.

Kenneth Tynan preached the gospel of Brecht, and the first real convert among the new playwrights was Edward Bond. Beginning in the early 1960s, Bond has furnished us with innumerable prefatory and expository statements on his own work. One such will have to suffice:

> "We mustn't write only problem plays, we must write answer plays. . . . The answers aren't always light, easy, or even straightforward, but the purpose—a socialist society—is clear."[12]

Clear to whom is not so apparent; but it was plain enough to those entering the subsidised theatre during this period what one had to do to get on. Following similar dicta, a whole school of playwrights and directors fanned out from the Royal Court and the RSC during the 1960s and 1970s, and eventually populated much of the subsidised sector. From their characteristic expression, they might be termed the Marxist Morose school. Unfortunately many people found their work as indistinguishable as their names: Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, Howard Davies, David Jones, David Mercer, David Rudkin, David Cregan, David Halliwell, David Caute, David Edgar, David Hare. . . . From time to time one of the Davids would step forward to say a few words on behalf of the boys. Here is David Edgar calling for a "radical, alternative Marxist theatre":

> "It must not be escapist; it must take our times by the throat. . . . the central artistic problem is portraying people's behaviour as a function of their social nexus rather than individual psychology."[13]

In fairness, we should recognise that much of this was simply the main-chance careerism of the period. One shrewd and experienced director explained to me that the way to get on in the subsidised theatre was to join some obscure Trotskyite grouping and go to work at the Liverpool Everyman for a year. Not to have belonged to some Far-Left alphabetical cluster was as glaring an omission as not wearing a top hat at Ascot would be in more elegant circles. If ever the Soviet Union is criticised by a British playwright it invariably (except for Tom Stoppard) turns out to be some disgruntled Trot attacking Stalinism. Utopian socialism is regarded as sacrosanct.

THIS SCHOOL OF DRAMATISTS achieved a remarkable homogeneity of purpose and of subject matter. Class confrontation was the standard theme, although racial and sexual variants were sometimes allowed. Onstage violence was also *de rigueur*. The characteristic stance was one of bulging-eyed indignation, epitomised in Howard Brenton's immortal line: "What has Michaelangelo ever done for the British working class?"

So perhaps it was understandable that the preferred writing style should also come to seem equally homogeneous. I find it hard to offer a precise literary description, since much of the writing was designedly semi-literate in order to avoid the charge of élitism. On stage it came across as both lumpy and resonant, especially when "poetic" effects were being attempted. Here is the climax of Edward Bond's *Bingo* (1973), which depicts William Shakespeare in a field near Stratford:

> "I didn't want to die. I could lie in this snow a whole life. I can think now, the thoughts come so easily over the snow and under my shroud. New worlds. Keys turning new locks—pushing the iron open like lion's teeth. Wolves will drag me through the snow. I'll sit in their lair and smile and be rich. In the morning or when I die the sun will rise and melt it all away. The dream. The wolves. The iron teeth. The snow. The wind. My voice. A dream that leads to sleep. (*He sits up.*) I'm dead now."

The play has Shakespeare committing suicide, crazed by guilt at the enclosure of the local common land. In his Introduction (1974), Bond angrily dismissed suggestions that this might be somewhat implausible. "My account rather flatters Shakespeare", he wrote. "If he didn't end in the way shown in the play, then he was a reactionary blimp or some other fool. . . ." We can observe the suppressed premise here: if Shakespeare could not feel the frustration and alienation of our embittered contemporary Leftists, he could not serve even as a martyr to the common struggle.

Most of these playwrights attempted to portray uneducated characters, using varying idiomatic forms which often seemed to merge into a kind of Cro-Magnon dialect passing itself off as demotic speech. I cannot better the description of one critic who called it "pseudo-poetic yob talk".[14] Here is the climactic moment from Howard Brenton's *Magnificence* (1973), in which a working-class militant addresses an imprisoned Tory Cabinet Minister:

> "Late, late summer, musky smell from the FUCKING RHODODENDRONS. An English garden with its Englishman. Done at last. DONE. Oh Mr I am deeply in contempt of you. All of you. Bubbles is it, in the muscle? Your nails, hair, little bits. And your mind. I am deeply in contempt of your English mind. There is BLAME THERE. That wrinkled stuff with the picture of English Life in its pink, rotten meat. In your head. And the nasty tubes to your eyes that drip Englishness over everything you see. The cool, glycerine humanity of your tears that smarms our ANGER."

I think it is worth pointing out that these passages are supposed to stand as moments of supreme eloquence in the plays in question. This kind of writing was not confined to obscure fringe venues, but was to be found on the main stages of the subsidised theatre, both in London and the regions. But then, these playwrights rejected the whole notion of

[12] "Letter to Tony Coult" in *Edward Bond: A Companion to the Plays*, ed. Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts (1978), p. 75.

[13] Statement in *Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. James Vinson (1977), p. 235.

[14] James Fenton, *The Sunday Times*, 19 October 1980.

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"good writing", along with other bourgeois baggage like individual psychology. They prided themselves on their engagement with the social and political issues of the day. Such, at least, was the claim: down with injustice, forward a better world.

WHEN WE CONSIDER the political and social drama of the past twenty years, what is striking is not only how one-sided most of it is, but also how much has been left out. The subsidised theatre's idea of a political debate was to show a group of people sitting around discussing whether socialism should be achieved by violence or simply by direct action. Perhaps the supreme example of this type of drone-in drama was Trevor Griffiths' *The Party* (National Theatre, 1973)—set, inevitably, in 1968. In his final stage role, Sir Laurence Olivier played a Trotskyite party boss who delivers a lengthy harangue to an assorted group of media and theatrical trendies:

> "You're intellectuals. You're frustrated by the ineffectual character of your opposition to the things you loathe. Your main weapon is the word. Your protest is verbal—it has to be: it wears itself out by repetition and leads you nowhere."

These words were truer than the author intended. For although the playwrights of this school conveyed a strong sense of a decline, even of a crisis, in national affairs, the actual nature of that crisis appears to have eluded them. As an American academic (Stanley Weintraub) noted in a survey of the period:

> "Ironically, many of the playwrights nursed one way or another by the public sector would become harsh critics of their society, some turning out blistering agitprop plays aimed at converting, further leftward, audiences who seldom if ever went to a playhouse."[15]

Many of the fundamental problems of British society were either not mentioned at all, or were treated from so narrow a perspective as to preclude understanding. It seemed to have escaped their attention that Britain already had a semi-socialist system. Consequently, the failures of that system were barely examined.

There was no reference, for example, to the declining competitiveness of British industry or to the obstructive role of the trade unions. Private industry was constantly attacked; state-owned industry never. The immense and growing burden of the public sector was scarcely mentioned (which was perhaps understandable, considering that the subsidised theatre was part of that burden). The rise of a vast local and national government bureaucracy was largely ignored, or else dealt with in the jejune terminology of "*Organise and Smash the State!*" Even when the National Theatre put on a production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1985), the director asserted that it represented a "courageous indictment" of Czarist despotism. The Welfare State was criticised only for not being even bigger and consuming even more of the Gross National Product. The concomitant growth of a culture of parasitism and state-dependency was never mentioned. The collapse in educational standards was greeted almost gleefully, as a liberation from "élitism". In play after play it was presented as axiomatic that the police, the armed forces, and the judiciary were crypto-fascist, and that jackboots were on the march. Left-wing paranoia seemed to give both performers and audience an obscure form of thrill. The grasp of economics was quite literally childlike; it consisted of holding out your hand and saying "Give me more. . . ." Inflation, which in the real world was destroying the basis of the economy (as Lenin said it would), was scarcely mentioned.

THAT KIND of narrow-mindedness was traceable in the treatment of external affairs. The subsidised theatre adopted a knee-jerk anti-Americanism—which says a lot for the transatlantic generosity of their summer audiences—and a kind of crawling subservience towards the Third World and other enemies of the West. Terrorists, especially anti-British terrorists, were routinely presented as liberators (though writers from Northern Ireland, who had some experience of these matters, were by no means as glib as their English counterparts). A policy of appeasement was regarded as the truly moral one. For Britain to defend British people on British territory from internal subversion or alien aggression was customarily presented as "imperialism" or as "historic oppression".

Howard Brenton's play *The Romans in Britain* (National Theatre, 1980) offered perhaps the most crass reiteration of a standard theme:

> "I keep on seeing the dead. A field in Ireland, a field in England. And faces like wood. Charred wood, set in the ground.
> Staring at me.
> The faces of our forefathers.
> Their eyes are sockets of rainwater, flickering with gnats.
> They stare at me in terror.
> Because in my hand there's a Roman spear. A Saxon axe.
> A British Army machine-gun.
> The weapons of Rome, invaders, Empire."

The British victory in the Falklands provoked many of the writers to shrill bursts of outrage. One might have thought that the overthrow of a real fascist dictatorship would meet with some approval, but such was not the case. Indeed Steven Berkoff, in his *Sink the Belgrano!* (Half Moon, 1986), exploded into verse:

> *Oh you most brave and valiant Englishmen*
> *Who never shall, no never bear the yoke*
> *Of shame or curdled pride beneath the boot*
> *Of some o'erweening greasy foreign bloke . . .*
> *But once aroused, oh ho! old Albion snorts*
> *The Bulldog, start-eyed, drools for Argy blood*
> *Outraged its precious garden overrun*
> *By foreign, greasy, dark unholy scum.*

[15] Stanley Weintraub, "Foreword", *British Dramatists Since World War II* (Michigan, 1982), p. xi.

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This kind of doggerel served to illustrate how little these ideologised writers understood the real thoughts and feelings of their countrymen, or the history which has shaped them.

As for the British Empire, its history was presented in the drama with unmixed shame and guilt. That many of Britain's former imperial subjects now seemed eager to come and live in the country which had exploited and oppressed them was taken as a golden opportunity to sermonise about racism. And the new wave of feminism in the '70s offered fresh fields for didacticism and mutual castigation.

THE REASON WHY the subsidised theatre ignored most of the real problems in British society was simple: it was itself one of the problems. It was part of the public sector; it was heavily unionised; it depended on ever-increasing hand-outs of inflated money. It existed to promote its own attitudes at the public expense: appeasement, paranoia, welfarism, unionisation, relativist moral and educational postures. So far from offering a diagnosis of the British disease, it was one of the symptoms—minor, but virulent. During the worst years of the disease, it was flourishing—enjoying approbation from the intellectuals, bigger hand-outs every year, a platform to promote its views, lucrative film and television spin-offs, the American market. . . .

No one could have been more stunned at the election result of May 1979. How could such a thing happen? As one of the playwrights put it:

> "There was undoubtedly a period of silence in the theatre when Mrs Thatcher came to power. A lot of writers stopped writing because they didn't know how to deal with her arrival."[16]

Yet even the most obtuse of the Leftist writers of the period must have sensed that some kind of tide was beginning to turn, and that their wave was starting to ebb. Hence a note heard increasingly in the drama of the late 1970s and early 1980s that was very different from the aggressive triumphalism of a decade earlier, a note that can only be described as an endless whine. Here, for example, is the opening of David Hare's *Plenty* (National Theatre, 1978):

> ALICE: I don't know why anybody lives in this country. No wonder everyone has colds all the time. Even what they call passion, it still comes at you down a blocked nose.
>
> (*Susan* smokes quietly. *Alice* is distracted by some stray object which she tosses into a packing case. The man stirs and turns over. He is middle aged, running to fat and covered in dried blood.)
>
> SUSAN: And the food.
>
> ALICE: Yeah. The wet. The cold. The flu. The loveless English. How is he?
>
> SUSAN: He's fine.

By way of a change from whining, we still sometimes get yelling, but its tone nowadays seems to be increasingly desperate. As in the concluding confrontation scene of Doug Lucie's *Fashion* (RSC, 1987):

> AMANDA: There has never been socialism in this country. It's never been tried. . . . I'm sick of it. Your little parliamentary game. Your boys' club with its crappy rules and its honorary men. (*She looks at Gill.*) Pretending to be alternatives to each other. Well, you're all petrified. Every last one of you. Petrified of anything that'd shake you out of your cosy embrace. . . .

And so on, for another 30 shrill lines. How often in this type of play the authors nowadays use women characters to deliver their moral imperatives! No doubt deference to the current wave of feminism has something to do with this; but in an earlier and less enlightened age some of it might almost have been described as nagging. Here, for example, is the climactic Greenham Common scene from David Edgar's *Maydays* (1983):

> AMANDA: And of course you may say that the urge to stop the planet being blown to blazes is a form of brute material self-interest—
>
> MARTIN: Well, that's certainly an argument—
>
> AMANDA: Or that to want these aeroplanes removed is merely good old British national pride—
>
> MARTIN: Well, nobody likes Yanks—
>
> AMANDA: But I think in fact that in the end what they are doing, what we are all trying to do in our many different ways, can only be accounted for by something in the nature of our species which resents, rejects, and ultimately will resist a world that is demonstrably and in this case dramatically wrong and mad and unjust and unfair.
>
> And I wonder, Martin, If you ever really felt like that.
>
> And if you did, if you can still remember.
>
> MARTIN: No.

DOES ALL THIS REALLY MATTER? The theatre is, after all, a marginal activity. Britain managed adequately without a subsidised sector from 1585 to 1945. Is it really important that much of what is offered these days should be so predictable, so outdated, or—if pleasurable—so easily dismissed? Cynical Cabinet Ministers and civil servants may regard the subsidised arts as a form of social insurance. ("Keeps down the unemployment figures. . . . Does no harm to give these chaps a chance to let off steam. Better than letting off bombs, anyhow. . . . Helps the tourist trade.") Who is to say that they are mistaken?

For the subsidised theatre does have major achievements to its credit, in contemporary drama as well as in the classics. It is unfortunate that, of the most intelligent modern dramatists (Tom Stoppard, Michael Frayn, Hugh Whitemore, Simon Gray), so many now choose to present their new works in the West End rather than on the subsidised stage, but this may be for financial as well as artistic reasons. Encouragingly, the subsidised theatre has recently presented playwrights like Vaclav Havel, Jean Genet, and John Whiting, as well as the more predictable names. It would be unfair to suggest that

[16] David Hare, *City Limits*, 3 May 1985.

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the subsidised theatre is nothing more than a platform for Left propaganda, or that all of its practitioners are mentally stuck in 1968. The socio-political drama is only one aspect of its work, albeit the most vociferous. Even here, some lasting accomplishments may have been registered.

MY PERSONAL VIEW is that the Government should maintain public expenditure on the arts. It is true that public money can be misused, but so can private funds. Neither the Government nor the Arts Council should attempt to intervene in artistic policy: reform must come from within the institutions. Possibly the impending change of leadership in the two great London companies will lead to a regeneration, or at least a freshness of approach. Slowing of the rate of increase in state subsidy may induce a less insulated, less self-indulgent attitude, while the perceived failure of many of the ideals and attitudes of the post-War consensus might in time generate new thinking—rather than the current nostalgia or resentment.

The subsidised theatre is unquestionably one of the success stories of modern Britain: paradoxically so, in view of its characteristic demeanour. Among the established directors and playwrights there are many with real talent, even if it has often seemed rebarbative or misdirected. In any case, they may have no choice. As Terry Hands put it:

> "Everything is a risk these days. As well as our Shakespeare, we must be able to be adventurous and to explore. If we don't then we'll die."

AUTHORS

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THEATRE

Hopes for Survival

By Edward Pearce

No one quite associates the official Soviet theatre with compelling immediacy. *Sarcophagus* (Royal Shakespeare Company, at the Mermaid), by Vladimir Gubaryev (the Science Editor of *Pravda*), is certainly official both in its anti-nuclear warning and in a directness which now has governmental directives behind it. If one wanted to be unkind, a comparison might be pressed with Soviet cars—solid, proficient variants of discontinued American or Italian designs, but priced below the market and pretty good between A and B. It is, incidentally, translated into a fine, flowing, lucid English by Michael Glenny, hero of the Solzhenitsyn field. *Sarcophagus* was shrewdly identified by a colleague as a Soviet version of *Airport*. The spectrum of citizens—fire chief, old peasant woman, physicist, criminal, and power-station director—are thrown together by a common calamity and have their destinies resolved in its glare. It is *Airport*, I think, with the plane crashing.

As a formula it can hardly fail as entertainment or discreet propaganda; and Mr Gubaryev, who is not trying his hand at the theatre for the first time, uses his sanatorium for the terminally radiated with some effect. The Soviet message of sorts is a benign one: the vanity and incompetence of second-rate *apparatchiks*, who may be decent men in themselves, can spark a catastrophe; a good peasant struggles pitifully and movingly on through tragedy; and (something we can all concur with) spilt nuclear power is bloody dreadful.

One might not expect a fate figure or chorus to look anything but affected (Fry-Eliot one-stroke wind-up engine, 1944 model), but Nicholas Wooderson, in greenish make-up and George Formby teeth, is integrated into the action as a clownish technician irradiated while drunk in a laboratory (another Gorbachov *don't*) long before Chernobyl.

Accordingly, his comments, interwoven with the procession of new arrivals at the sanatorium he has had to himself, do not jar as a stagey device. The play opens and closes with this "Immortal", who has survived radiation for 400 days, choosing himself a new cubicle. In between, peasant, physicist, criminal, fire chief, and station director have hoped for survival, quarrelled or fallen ineptly in love with nurses, and died.

One says "propaganda" because various lessons are promoted by the piece. But despite a mild tendency to pronounce, the touch is light and the message one of general urgency rather than the crude Party line which would have come from any officially approved piece even three years ago.

The best guide to the author's political chart is the elder woman doctor, a conservative figure who dislikes Americans and has pronounced loyalties to "our way". She is portrayed positively as both honourable *and* wrong-headed, a dragon in shining armour. It may be the Science Editor of *Pravda* keeping one foot in the old régime in case it comes back; it may be a built-in Russian habit of liking authority figures; it may even be a fair-minded attempt to give a decent representative of the Old Guard a piece of the action. Similarly, an American doctor is portrayed in the most sympathetic fashion as a humane expert wanting to do nothing but help. The interplay between him and his Soviet female colleague actually articulates a recognisable mixture of inferiority complex, resentment, and admiration between the two countries—and does so rather well.

This is not a first-rate play, but it is a proficient, honest attempt to deal with a first-rate calamity made by man. It contrasts ironically with the general run of Western Left-wing plays and films which have dealt with civil nuclear power. These, from *The China Syndrome* through to the sort of tosh I have had to watch at the Trotsky Memorial Hall (Riverside Studios, Hammersmith), are plain hysterical about civil nuclear power. A Soviet author, however enlightened, is like Kipling as Orwell described him. He writes about events from the point of view of those in power, asking, "Very well, you have a problem. How will you cope with it? . . ." The tone, although properly appraised of a horror—the Angel Wormwood from *Revelation*, which translates into the root of "Chernobyl", is savoured with its fire and slaughter, as well it might be—displays no apocalyptical hysteria to match the Biblical allusion.

Sarcophagus is the official Soviet view. It is entirely empirical—how did we get it wrong, how do we proceed with nuclear power in a sensible way? Imagine a disaster followed by many deaths in a Western nuclear station, and a Western play proclaiming the same sensible message—what a conspiracy of Establishment complacency! what licensing of murder for the future! I was reminded of the Soviet delegation to the recent Socialist Conference convened by our Tony Benn in Chesterfield. Their representative spoke the only temperate and rational words of the entire weekend. . . .

Away from ideology and on to the Classic-struggle, it is always a pleasure to see Shakespeare survive a new London production. *The Winter's Tale*, done at the Barbican by the Royal Shakespeare Company (transferred from Stratford), does all of that. Prettiness is back in fashion. After the Greek Island escapism so admirable in *Twelfth Night*, we have the white-and-cream Regency costume designed by Alexander

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Reid for Terry Hands's production—pure self-indulgent elegance and very nice. We also have verse decently spoken for once, which comes as a rare indulgence of the theatre-goer who had grown accustomed to assassinatory diction.

The production is dominated for me by Gillian Barge as another benevolent dragon (Paulina), and by Penny Downie doubling as Hermione and Perdita, convincingly carrying from the sad gravity of the Queen to the skittish sweetness of the young girl. This is, after all, a Woman's play. Every feminist should keep a copy in her apron pocket. Pregnant wife accused of adultery by irrational husband, sycophantic fellow chauvinists at court joining abjectly in conspiracy, indomitable second woman Paulina making lonely stand for sanity—very satisfactory. We always knew men were like that. Actually, *The Winter's Tale* is a beautiful fantasy stretched out upon the frame of an absurd narrative. The characters are more attractive than the whole action. Nothing will make the actions of Leontes credible. He simply flips: sane, paranoid, sane: putting the action on a false footing which, somehow, the language—the "spider in the cup" speech, for example—90% redeems. It is like so much opera: the libretto being more or less nonsense, one listens to the music.

It is a pity, then, to spoil the country scenes, after the deft good taste of the court setting, with the brutish ego-tripping of Joe Melia as Autolycus. The intrusion of a blaring tune halfway between pop and music hall accompanies Mr Melia as he does his swaggering solo. The part is almost segregated from the rest of the action; and the concession to the Theatre of Affront, after the delicacy and subtlety of the Court scenes, attempts a frisson it never gets. One understands how Shakespeare felt about Will Kemp, the tedious clown and jig-maker whose antics inspired the reproof to the players in *Hamlet*. But this Kemp is jigging on director's

Monastic Judges & Worldly Courts

New York City

A Felix Frankfurter *saga is in the making, and the newest addition to it concerns the most important judicial decision of the century—the* **Brown v. Board of Education** *desegregation case (1954).*

Every great decision carries an inside story with it. We knew that there was turmoil among the Judges on the eve of the case, making it unlikely that a majority could be found to attack and overrun the **Plessy v. Ferguson** *fortress of "Separate but Equal" schools. We knew also that Chief Justice Fred Vinson was hostile to any new doctrine on school equality, and that his death and replacement by Earl Warren opened the possibility of getting the needed majority.*

Now comes **a Harvard Law Review segment of an oral history done by Philip Elman, a Justice Dept. official who was a former law clerk and close friend of Justice Frankfurter. It is an explosive story, of how Frankfurter and Elman worked together to contrive a strategy that would make the *Brown* case a turning-point in the history of access to education for all children.**

The problem *was to avoid a divided court and a divisive decision that would split the nation. Frankfurter told Elman that Justice Hugo Black (Alabama liberal that he was) wanted a new doctrine but kept warning his fellow justices that if the court overruled* **Plessy** *and also mandated the integration of the nation's schools it would mean open rebellion in the South—that "the Klan would ride again".*

Frankfurter was realist enough to take Black seriously. He also knew that only a unanimous decision could summon the moral authority to rally the nation and cushion the shock.

Felix Frankfurter, **ever the Law Professor, found an eager listener in the new Chief Justice, Earl Warren, as he portrayed for him the chance which the case offered the Court for an act of statesmanship. The Court ordered the school cases reargued and asked the Justice Department to submit a brief—which Elman wrote.**

Its crucial proposal was for the Court to put a legal end to segregated schools—but not mandate their immediate integration. Instead the Warren opinion for a unanimous court in 1954 ordered integration "with all deliberate speed"—a phrase that has become famous for the ambiguity which provided the necessary breathing spell and face-saving.

It took several decades and the resistance fought a series of rearguard actions, but the Federal district judges proved strong and held to their purpose.

It was a watershed decision. America became the first multiracial nation to resolve its major racial inequality by constitutional means.

Did Frankfurter overstep *the bounds of judicial propriety in his talks with his former law clerk? Clearly he did. But Elman's answer rings true.*

> **"Without that little impropriety you would not have had this enormous contribution to American constitutional life of the 20th century."**

Five years ago Bruce Allen Murphy, in his book, "The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection", chronicled an earlier impropriety by both men in a long private partnership to effect social change together. Murphy quotes a 1943 Frankfurter diary entry, noting that a justice is like a monk who "leaves all sorts of worldly desires behind him" and that "this court has no excuse for being unless it's a monastery".

Does the newly revealed Elman account about a case some years later turn Frankfurter into a hypocrite? Perhaps. But I see the diary entry as a cry from the warring heart against a fate which made him work always in the shadows.

Frankfurter was at bottom a political activist and strategist, whether as law professor, collaborator with Justice Louis Brandeis, adviser to President Roosevelt, or Supreme Court Justice.

Proprieties **are not trivial. In government they are necessary as norms. But it would be a foolish nation that makes its rules of propriety so rigid as to exclude propriety-breakers like Brandeis, Roosevelt, and Frankfurter.**

Max Lerner
in the New York Post

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orders. Such insensibility is particularly regrettable in a production which takes great trouble to catch the tragedy of the children—Mamilius dead and Perdita lost. Intended as a counterpoint, the Autolycus scenes, good rough comedy on the page, become a dissonance, planned but miscalculated.

GETTING SHAKESPEARE right is a minor endeavour compared with Molière. The language of 17th-century literary France has few glories (except for the pedant and the O-level student). The vocabulary is at once tiny and florid. To translate faithfully is to invite derision for those arthritic flourishes from the Royal Soviet of Louis XIV, yet most adapted free translations have a flashy knowingness about them. The effect is that of a drunken mortician putting a Cupid's bow on a corpse.

All the more reason, then, to celebrate the intelligence of the translation of *Le Malade Imaginaire* made by Alan Drury, and the production by Nancy Meckler, for a funny version which, despite the odd belly-laugh, misses the temptation of gross vulgarisation and at key comic moments intelligently cuts back into a literal grandiosity direct from the French. Such operatic artificiality is deliciously managed by Kathryn Hunter when her father repents and authorises her marriage in the last act.

Given the frozen implausibility of French classical drama, only such devices will get one through an inherently undramatic narrative. Things which shouldn't work, like the Yorkshire actor Brian Glover playing Argan's brother in a check jacket and pork-pie hat, with a copy of *The Sporting Life* sticking out of his pocket, actually come over delightfully. In the part of Argan, Tom Courtenay, who has developed ingenuousness into a cottage industry, flourishes as the King of the Sick-room. It is the part in which Molière ironically keeled over and died, having grievously overestimated his own health. In that fate he may be joined by the Lyric Theatre, which loses a key subsidy and has petitions ready at its doors for spectators to sign. It deserves better than such anxieties. This is the sort of supple, attention-holding production which brings directorial cleverness back into repute.

IF IT IS in order to write after the event of a production with a fixed short run in repertory, something should be said about the John Whiting revival at the Orange Tree, Richmond. *No More a Roving* was Whiting's first play, and belongs to the mid-1940s, the age of V-neck pullovers and utility furniture. It also belongs to a time whose plays would be unstageable now. A revival of N. C. Hunter seems unlikely, but Whiting is rightly perceived as a Virgil before Christianity, a modern treading gently through the grim days of Eliot for the carriage trade, and *Waiting for Gillian* for the tea-tray crowd.

It is a modest, intelligent piece, built upon suppressed information. But since fairly cheerful adultery is involved, it must have troubled the Lord Chamberlain, who used to worry about that sort of thing on our behalf. It also contains what ought to be an unforgivable piece of snobbery—a sustained serving-girl joke of the kind in which pre-War *Punch* used to indulge. But Whiting's touch is so light that Willy Yates (Amanda Royle in clog-footed glory), the girl concerned, emerges as a classic hoyden handed on from Goldsmith, Farquhar, and the 18th century. There is no condescension and no middle-class spite in her predicament, since Willy seems to have rather more grip on events than Angus her employer, trying his hand at retrospective philandering, or Benedict, a British silly ass (perfectly done by Brian Deacon with a nervous smile like a disoriented traffic-light), who could easily have taken a couple of steps further into tragedy.

Some authors are cruel to their characters. Whiting here, as in the far better known *Penny for a Song*, is kind to them. A miasma of inadvertence envelops the lovers' reunion of Angus, Kirsty, and hapless Benedict, doomed to arouse affection untouched by eros. What is wrong of course, is the conclusion, which will have seen things right by the Lord Chamberlain.

Gods out of the machine, especially gods up the playwright's sleeve, can only get short-term, squibbish, theatrical returns. Kirsty's comic husband is a prop for the Censor's morality; and her happy return to him is psychologically impossible. Whiting gets his music back to the Home key with a four-square C-major chord, familiar from the Hymnbook. This accommodates the proprieties of his times, but betrays the characters he has built up. That said, however, Whiting—flaws and all—is welcome in every revival we can get.

It is typical of the Orange Tree to have chosen its repertory so shrewdly. Sam Walters's upstairs theatre ought to be seen as an extension of mainline theatre for any visitor to London. It sits directly opposite Richmond station, no distance down the District Line from Central London. It accommodates playgoers with a downstairs restaurant, while the upstairs room, holding 100 people, has an outstanding repertory of serious but accessible plays—chosen, one supposes, because Mr Walters backs his own enthusiasms. The absence of eccentricity or an ideological axe to grind, combined with excellent young professionals and visiting names, makes the Orange Tree the sanest and the most consistently satisfying of all the fringe and small-theatre groups in London. With the Lyric's future threatened, and public spending on good theatre negligible, anyone who can turn the upstairs room of a pub (elsewhere the home of the Theatre of Protest and the desk-drawer unperformable tract) into intelligent mainstream theatre deserves all the logs one can roll.

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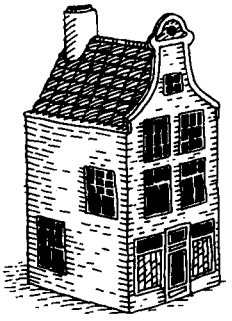
Faults of the Dutch

The Changing Debate—By HANS DAALDER *&* BART TROMP



OPINIONS ON a country which is rarely discussed in the world press are bound to be formed from a mélange of stereotypes—fleeting impressions based on infrequently reported incidents. Intellectuals may be aware of the prominent role Holland played in the early days of modern capitalism and colonial expansion, or grant the role of Dutch printing presses in the development of international intellectual exchange in the 17th century and the French Enlightenment, but that special position is long past. The Netherlands clearly became less prominent within Europe long before Europe itself began to decline on the world scene, and folkloristic images soon got the upper hand. What was this country, after all, but a miniature state, with small cities and tiny houses, a tidy man-made landscape, and a reputation for cleanliness? Such a nation could more easily be given credit for its ability to make cheese or sell tulips than for creating multinational companies like Philips, Shell, or Unilever. The long tradition of neutralism and interest in the Law of the Seas might make it a natural home for a Peace Palace, housing a not overly effective International Court of Justice, and after the horrors of 1940-45 (symbolised by the fate of Anne Frank) the country could develop into an active proponent of the new Europe or a faithful ally in NATO. But on the whole it seemed above all sedate, not to say stodgy—fittingly symbolised by the House of Orange which (they said) was surely the richest royal house in the world. . . .

In the last two decades, that image has changed. Troubles about the monarchy (over two marriages of royal princesses, including the present Queen, as well as the Prince Bernhard/Lockheed affair) reached the world press. So, in the mid-1960s, did the activities of *Provo*, which made Amsterdam a credible rival to Berkeley, California, as the cradle of counter-cultural movements. The city acquired a reputation as an easy centre for the street-wise trafficking and use of drugs, and in the 1980s, squatters' movements led to rioting on an unprecedented scale. Just as the announcement of the engagement of Beatrix as Crown Princess in 1965 and her marriage in 1966 had triggered spectacular manifestations of a new protest culture, so the official ceremonies at the time of her inauguration in 1980 were largely overshadowed by street fights between youngsters and the police. The Netherlands, home of many liberties, gained a reputation for libertinism and rebelliousness.

This was a trend confirmed by the findings of social research: the Dutch were singled out as showing great "value changes" in "libertine directions", and a growing tolerance for unconventional actions in both personal and political life. At the same time the Dutch Catholic Church, so it seemed, had undergone radical changes in doctrine and practice, causing a head-on collision with the Vatican (which has recently been using the weapon of episcopal appointment in an effort to tame its once favourite, and now rebellious daughter).

The Netherlands developed new stands on foreign issues: a clear *tiers-mondisme* in the UN, an ambiguous stance within NATO on the stationing of *Pershing* and Cruise missiles, and vast Peace Marches—followed recently by a massive petition against the stationing of missiles, organised by an Inter-Church Peace Council and a host of other political and social organisations. Walter Laqueur coined "Hollanditis" as the technical term for a disease which might prove infectious.[1]

In such traditional and present-day images, however, there is substantial simplification and error. Other countries take little serious interest in Dutch developments, let alone studying them, and many of the Dutch are themselves hardly interested in changing that situation (for all the active social-science research carried out in and on the country). One reason is, perhaps, the rather large gap between Dutch

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[1] Philip P. Everts, *Controversies at Home: Domestic Factors in the Foreign Policy of the Netherlands* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985). Walter Laqueur, "Hollanditis", *Commentary*, August 1981.

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politics and the world of industry and commerce. About 10% of Dutch industry is export-oriented, and that 10% produces almost half of the national output. Dutch banks and commercial companies tend to go their own way in the world market without bothering much about domestic politics—provided they receive the necessary government backing in their economic and scientific transactions.

The Impact of History

DESPITE ITS SMALL SIZE, the Netherlands for long remained internally a highly localised and differentiated society. Born from a 16th-century revolt against an attempt to establish a strong central government, insistence on "privileges" and "liberties" stood at the cradle of the nation, and such demands often had a rebellious and particularist flavour. From the outset Dutch society had possessed strong bourgeois characteristics.

A true hereditary aristocracy was found in some less-developed parts of the country, but urban patricians were generally more prominent than noblemen. In the absence of a strong central government, political élites remained dispersed and divided. The Netherlands may have had a sustained period of oligarchical and traditional rule, but there was no such thing as a visible, public "upper class". The poor were numerous, but a strong, self-conscious proletariat hardly existed. Eventually the country developed as a rather middle-class society, with many petty social distinctions and jealousies, but no clearly marked differences between different estates or classes.

Diversity also marked the religious make-up of the country. Foreign observers have often regarded the Netherlands as the Protestant country *par excellence*. Didn't it attain independence during the period of the 16th- and 17th-century religious wars, under Calvinist leadership? Such observers have generally not been aware that for a long time the Catholics remained an extremely large minority; in fact it never fell below one third of the new nation's population. Within the Dutch Protestant world there were not only a number of Non-Conformist groups (Mennonites, Remonstrants, Lutherans), but there was also considerable conflict over the precise nature of the relation between Church and State within the very much larger Dutch Reformed Church. Somewhat Erasmian and worldly outlooks were common among the city rulers; and stricter forms of Calvinism, far from attaining undivided power, never even saw their Dutch Reformed Church become the formal State church. Once the new, unitary state was established in 1795, other churches attained fully equal rights. If there was interference between Church and State in the 19th century, it was the State which sought to regulate the internal affairs of the Churches rather than the Dutch Reformed Church, or other Protestant or Catholic churches, dictating to secular rulers.

At the same time, there is little doubt that religious differences and claims were to provide the main 19th-century social cleavages in Dutch society. Paradoxically, processes of social modernisation in the Netherlands consisted for the most part in active mobilisation of both Calvinists and Catholics, who eventually built up a wide array of social organisations for all manner of activities. Jointly, they obtained in Parliament a clear political majority, which lasted for half a century, from the introduction of universal suffrage in 1917 until 1967. There were always Catholics and usually Calvinists in the Cabinet, but this was a coalition of separate religious minorities, rather than one dominant movement.

Many political commentators have fallen victim to a "French" (or "Italian") perspective on the role of religion in European politics. They hold that the Churches were naturally on the side of Tradition if not Reaction. They overlook the alternative perspective of the mobilisation of religious groups in the Non-Conformist manner—as in England or in the counter-cultural movements of a Scandinavian Left. Dutch Calvinists and Catholics were on the whole rather "internally"-directed, and within either group the role of clergy and doctrine was strong. But their position in society was such that the formation of powerful, if separate, religion-based *familles spirituelles* also reflected social modernisation and democratisation. This reinforced older pluralist and particularist traditions in Dutch history. It also tied local believers and national decision-makers more closely together in strong social and political organisations.

The powerful position and social organisation of religious groups, the absence of strong class demarcations, and the rather late arrival of modern industrialisation in the Netherlands—all these put definite limits on the potential for Socialist growth. Agnostics and the less observant religious groups, which were most easily accessible to Socialist attitudes, remained a minority. That part of the population was internally divided, moreover, between all manner of liberal and socialist groups, and for a long time this condemned Dutch Socialists to somewhat of a ghetto position —Socialists-plus-Communists hardly ever acquired more than about a quarter of the national vote, and the Socialists were unable to join national coalition governments until just before World War II. They therefore also developed into a somewhat "introvert" social group, which with its plethora of social organisations became a secular "church for the churchless", somewhat doctrinally oriented, and with little effective power.

As a result of the efforts of Calvinists, Catholics, and Socialists, Dutch society became highly organised but also clearly divided, leaving the once-dominant Liberal groups to proclaim "general" (in practice mainly secularist and middle-class) goals, while retaining only a numerically weak basis in the population. Among social scientists, the Dutch system of segmentation or subcultural fragmentation (dubbed *Verzuiling*, a society with three to four separate "pillars") became a somewhat curious model,[2] posing the problem of

[2] This picture was reinforced by the circumstance that this was exactly the lead theme of the one influential book on Dutch politics to appear in English, Arend Lijphart's intelligent study on *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, 1968, 2nd rev. ed., 1975).

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how such a divided society could cohere and govern itself in relative peace.

The End of Social Segmentation

WHATEVER THE VALUE OF THE *Verzuiling* model (it has come in for extensive criticism as to its value both for contemporary understanding and for historical explanation), there is little doubt that it has begun to show many cracks and changes in the last decades.

Church attendance has dropped drastically in the Netherlands. For many walks of life, survey research reveals a massive gap between official doctrine and individual beliefs and practices. Many sectoral organisations have gone their separate ways, with little reference to the ideological groupings which originally fostered them. Elections were once a census of different ideological groups, with highly stable numerical relations between them, rather than a matter of clear choice. But traditional ties between voters and parties were broken, leading to massive electoral volatility and, at least initially, to a clear fragmentation of the party system. A number of new, smaller parties sprang up, and as a result the major Calvinist and Catholic parties saw their strength reduced in the elections of the early 1970s to less than one third of the vote (as against half, or more, in previous decades). The votes went to either Socialists or Liberals, or to the new parties which could be found both on the Left and on the Far Right, as well as nearer the centre of the political spectrum—*Democrats '66* being the best known international example of a radical reform movement posturing in a new pragmatic stance.

Why such changes, in what had seemed a rock-like political and social landscape?

ONE MAJOR explanation centres on the theological changes which had been taking place in the Churches since the 1930s.[3] The influence of Karl Barth within different Protestant Churches, and the impact of new philosophical and theological currents within the Catholic Church (given official encouragement at the Second Vatican Council) led to a much more active concern with contemporary political and social issues, whether in confronting the dangers of "national-socialism" or atheistic Communism, seeking "new ways of social justice" within the Netherlands, or meeting "the misery of the Third World". As the Churches came to be judged on their "relevance" to this-worldly, rather than other-worldly matters, they moved (sometimes willingly, often unwittingly) nearer to political controversy. The hold of Churches and Church leaders on their followers was affected, eroding the bonds which tied the religious subcultures together.

Another factor was the nemesis of success. The building of specialised organisations gave different ideological groups secure access to the levers of power. Rights were *granted*; they no longer had to be fought over. Claims were settled by routine procedures, and ideological fervour was sapped. The very success of social emancipation weakened the role of the emancipationist organisations, for it replaced political content with bureaucratic regulation. Similarly, the *Verzuiling* process had led within each of the subcultures to the establishment of many specialised organisations for comparable social activities. Special interests began to forge links across the ideological dividing-lines. From looser forms of cooperation, new patterns of confederation, even amalgamation, could develop—de-emphasising earlier ideological origins and loosening the structures which earlier had tied different interests within the ideological family.

The system also underwent direct attack. Within the ideological family (and in society generally) new groups began to challenge existing patterns of authority—a theme which was reflected in modern Dutch literature. These groups rallied round the banner of "participatory democracy", and practised many forms of "direct confrontation". Existing doctrines were opposed by a congeries of values, often uncritically borrowed from the new international "Counter-Culture". In thus challenging existing authority and institutional patterns and procedures, the "new democrats" represented a new emotional fervour. Frequently they behaved like a "new elect", holding their new truths to be self-evident, without the need for much critical analysis (for all their self-professed reliance on imported *Kritische Theorie*).

The response was highly ambivalent. In recent generations, Dutch political and social leaders had rarely been exposed to "confrontational" politics, let alone to rebellion from within existing élite circles (including the universities[4]). Some leaders shied away; others handled confrontation ineptly; many wavered between permissive and repressive stances. To some extent the challenge could be accommodated in new particularist groups, but dissension soon manifested itself within the ranks of the neophytes. However, the quasi-revolutionary clamour became, to some extent, routinised. The mass media tended initially to over-report militant activities; but fatigue eventually set in, implying a decreasing rate of return for action in relation to effort. In recent years, it has become fashionable to speak of a "restoration" or a "new realism", but these trendy terms were also put forward with little critical evaluation.

The Roles of the Mass Media

MASS MEDIA have always played a considerable part in Dutch society. Just as the Dutch Republic had its *libellen* (the numerous broadsheets of that period) so the processes of social modernisation, democratisation and mobilisation of different ideological tendencies was accompanied by the establishment of a large number of daily

[3] For an interesting analysis in English, see Herman Bakvis, *Catholic Power in the Netherlands* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981).

[4] For a much more elaborate analysis see Hans Daalder, "The Netherlands: Universities between the 'New Democracy' and the 'New Management'", in Hans Daalder and Edward Shils (eds), *Universities, Politicians & Bureaucrats: Europe & the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 173-232.

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newspapers, weeklies, and monthlies, and by extensive pamphleteering. Leaders of the different communities often combined political roles with active journalism (including the editorships of major ideological newspapers). From such positions in the media they addressed not only their followers, but also one another.

But there was no absolute symmetry between the different sub-cultures. Liberal bourgeois interests were generally the first to get a strong footing, both in the larger daily newspapers of the major cities (which developed into national newspapers), and in many of the provincial centres. Calvinists, Catholics, and Socialists sought to build up their own daily newspapers in competition with these more "neutral" and "bourgeois" dailies. But they never attained the full strength in the world of the printed press that they achieved in many other sectors (politics, educational institutions, the umbrella organisations of interest groups, health care, etc.).

In radio, and later in television, things were different. Radio arrived in the 1920s when the various ideological families had attained strongly entrenched positions in society and could see that the new medium was neatly carved up between them: Socialists (Vara) and the bourgeois-neutral Avro broadcast on one station, and Calvinists (NCRV) and Catholics (KRO) alternated on a second (with some common services between them). Television arrived, much later, at a time when the idea of independent commercial television found numerous sympathisers; but the same system was followed.

Television time, like radio time, is allotted to specialised media associations on the basis of membership figures. Three thresholds must be crossed to reach what is called A-status (acquiring maximum time on the two television channels, on a proportional basis, once a limited number of common programmes have been scheduled). In addition to the four major ideology-based organisations, two more popularly oriented companies (Tros and Veronica) have climbed to A-status in recent years, while two smaller companies (VPRO and EO, representing respectively a more progressive and a fundamentalist Protestant public) have a lesser but secure place of their own. As television and radio time depend on the different broadcasting groups retaining adequate public support (usually counted by the number of persons subscribing to the particular Radio and TV guides published by each broadcasting organisation), there is considerable competition for public attention. This has had a paradoxical effect. Each company tends to cater to what is regarded as "popular taste" (calculated by the number of listeners or viewers, and the degree of appreciation expressed for any particular programme); and as their distinctive "personalities" are subdued they begin to resemble one another.

Has television been a neutral factor? Hardly. Whereas the press could still follow and reinforce ideological dividing lines, neither radio nor television was able to prevent audiences listening or seeing rival programmes, and ideological boundaries were rapidly penetrated. The different companies reacted increasingly to one another's programmes, and the pace of politics quickened as political leaders sought out (and were sought out by) the directors of radio and television commentaries, chat-shows, etc. Journalists on daily and weekly newspapers in turn reacted to the rapidly shifting monologues and dialogues of Radio and TV.

The whole has resulted in a rarified political world. Prominent players in that world are the many TV and Radio journalists, initially of the 1960s, who, coming from younger generations, frequently had considerable sympathy for New Left causes, while within the Calvinist and Catholic TV and Radio networks many of the more articulate journalists tended to sympathise with "modernist" and activist strands within their respective Churches. Many of the news and political commentary programmes have therefore tended to be couched in highly critical tones. Loaded interviews, deemed to be "tough" journalism, are in fact an easy substitute for the much more arduous task of responsible in-depth investigative reporting.

All this has led to the development of what has been called a "political-media complex"—a world in which a small number of politicians and journalists tend to react to one another in public, on TV and Radio, and in the Press, but the public itself does not participate or even pay a great deal of attention. The older ties which linked particular political groups to specific media have largely been broken; the daily and weekly newspapers, especially, have been de-emphasising (in their search for commercial survival) long-standing links with traditional groups. Radio and television companies receive grants from the proceeds of a Listening-and-Viewing Tax, and income from regulated advertising; they therefore remain somewhat freer from the laws of the market.

The Nature of Intellectual Debate

If we focus more directly on the role of intellectual debate in the Netherlands since the early 1960s, and the standard at which it is conducted, certain pervasive characteristics stand out.

There is, in the first place, a strong separation of "the two cultures". Dutch science is traditionally of a high level (witness several Nobel laureates, and the continuing presence in the country of several of the world's most prestigious industrial research laboratories). But the contribution of that scientific world to intellectual debate has been almost nil.

Then there is the heavy—and not always conscious—foundation of intellectual debate on religious and theological concepts. Calvinism was, after all, the dominant religion of the population, and Dutch Catholicism (and even Socialism) are heavily imbued with the Calvinist atmosphere. Debate is therefore normally carried on in strongly moralistic terms, and centres on sin, on motive and intention, and on guilt. This tendency was for a long time reinforced by a related characteristic: an emphasis on legalistic reasoning. Empirical questions (and questions of political and social theory) have largely been regarded as of secondary importance, in

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comparison with the issue of who is, morally or legally, wrong; and who is right.

In the last twenty years this strand of thought has been replaced by something that might be called "vulgar-sociological thinking", which tends to "explain" particular events not as discrete phenomena but as "symptoms" of more "fundamental" (or more important) currents. It thus, to a great extent, eliminates the idea of personal responsibility, and reinforces the traditional notions of moralistic reasoning by giving concepts like "guilt" and "sin" the stamp of "social science" and "objectivity".

A third characteristic was until recently the segmentation of intellectual debate along political and religious lines, with very little debate between the different ideological groups. If there was a "free-floating intelligentsia", it tended to concern itself mainly with literary issues; social and political subjects tended to be debated on their own merits only in so far as they made their way into works of literature.

The emergence of "secondary élites", after the virtual disintegration of the traditional segmented subcultures in the 1960s, bringing new and younger generations into the current intellectual and political debate, also brought change in the form and tone of the debate. The new participants were generally recruited from backgrounds in journalism, the universities (especially the rapidly growing social science departments), and from the lower regions of the greatly expanding public sector. Many aspired to positions of power. The traditional ways of quiet cooptation by the ruling élites had been discredited in the 1960s; now the preferred manner of reaching the top was to confront the Establishment with criticism and demands, ostensibly on behalf of "the People" (or particularly worthy sections of it), under the banner of some ringing moral principle. Intellectual debate proliferated in several directions. It shifted from the small cultural journals—the "little magazines" which cared most for literary subjects—to the more glossy magazines, the weeklies, and even the daily newspapers, where attention focused not on artistic and literary topics, but on social and political themes. For some, intellectual debate became merely an instrument in power struggles. The packaging of intellectual discourse for the mass media did not differ from the "cultural revolutions" of other Western countries, such as France, Germany, Italy, or the USA. What made the Netherlands different was that the new political discourse was so readily accepted by society in general and in particular by its ruling circles.

The demise of the politics of segmentation caused an ideological vacuum. Since the fundamental characteristics of democracy were identified with the particular form of Dutch politics in another era, they were often discarded in tandem. Dutch culture has always had a strong cosmopolitan flavour. Most members of the intelligentsia read English, German and (to a diminishing extent) French, and nowhere else outside the English-speaking world are so many books in English sold. All this facilitated the borrowing of new political and social ideas, while "vulgar sociology"—combined with the need to attract as much media attention as possible—added a particularly noisy and expressive dimension to the new debates.

Thus political debate in the 1960s and '70s came to be characterised by a strong emphasis on rhetoric and expressive slogans—in stark contrast with the sober nature of practical politicians. Over the years, the dissonance between rhetoric and actual policy has tended to cast a shadow over parliamentary policy, as demonstrated in a spectacular manner by the growth of the "Peace Movement". Even so, it must be kept in mind that, despite the sometimes idiosyncratic reporting of foreign observers,[5] and the opposition of about half the population to the stationing of Cruise missiles on Dutch soil, support for NATO has not changed in the last 30 years; it still stands at between 80% and 90% of the electorate.

On most political issues, however, the distance between the three major political parties (Social-Democrats, Christian-Democrats, and Liberals) is quite slight in comparison with many countries in Western Europe. One can interpret the strong emphasis on expressive symbols as an instrument for making clear distinctions between parties which in reality are not very far apart.

The Media & Intellectual Debate

THERE ARE important distinctions to be made when it comes to the electronic media as opposed to daily newspapers, weekly magazines, and other journals.

Due to the special nature of the Dutch broadcasting systems, fewer programmes can be considered a real contribution to political debate compared to those put out by radio and television stations in, for instance, the UK or the Bonn Republic.

Dutch newspapers offer a more favourable impression. Although the large-circulation daily newspapers take a conservative (or apolitical) stance, not catering in any way for political-cultural issues, the quality newspapers (notably *NRC-Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant*) give a great deal of space to such matters. In the 1960s a variety of weekly newspapers took over the function of the earlier, small (monthly or bi-monthly), mainly literary journals which had traditionally provided the main platform for the intelligentsia. These weeklies (generally of a Left-wing character such as *Haagse Post, Vrij Nederland* or *De Groene*) became the main means of disseminating new intellectual trends among the broad audience of students, teachers, young professionals, political activists and the like.

In the 1960s and '70s there was a virtual absence of conservative or Right-wing voices in intellectual debate. Even the Liberals (who in the Dutch context stand at the conservative pole of the Party spectrum) offered no distinct intellectual opposition to the dominant forces of the Left, while the Christian-Democrats offered no resistance at all, often pleading their own "progressiveness". There were—and are—hardly any intellectual circles or groupings on the Right which counter the leading ideas of the Left with analyses of their

[5] An example, apart from Walter Laqueur's famous piece on "Hollanditis", is the report on the Netherlands by Richard Reeves in the *International Herald Tribune* of 23 October 1985.

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own. Perhaps as a result of this, the political debates of the 1960s and 1970s can best be described as providing a generally vague, if sometimes sharp, altercation between the more traditional Social-Democratic views and those of the various strands of the New Left.

In the Netherlands, the New Left, though intellectually rather shallow, was much more moderate than its counterparts in other countries. In general, New Left ideas served above all as an instrument in the struggle for power inside the Labour Party, in trade unions, universities, and other public institutions. The authorities of the time met its onslaught with considerable meekness.

OVER THE YEARS one can clearly discern the phenomenon of political and cultural issues becoming "sinking commodities". Lively issues that had first been introduced and debated in academic circles were taken over in later years by other institutions and publics, and soon lost whatever intellectual or scientific originality they may have had. For example, ten years after Dutch academic circles had exhausted whatever useful ideas there were in the historical writings of American "Cold War revisionists" or the first generation of "Peace Researchers", their views were taken over by the Dutch Churches as if they were theological dogma.

Things change. In the 1980s there has been a general retreat from interest in public causes. Literature (which in the Netherlands took the private domain as its favourite subject) has tended to replace politics and general culture as the central topic of what passes for intellectual debate. Political debate, in daily and weekly newspapers, has become ossified. The participants are more and more self-appointed or official spokesmen for particular pressure groups, and on almost all issues, reactions have become predictable (as exemplified by the rapid proliferation of columnists who, though the column is a newish *genre* in Dutch cultural debate, are generally routine and superficial).

Does this tend to favour the return of the traditional cultural journals as the central platform for intellectual discourse? Most of them—notably those which emerged in the 1960s and '70s—now focus almost exclusively on literature. Only four journals can be said to deal with political and cultural subjects in general: *De Gids*; *Hollands Maandblad*; *Tirade*; and *Maatstaf*. Apart from *Tirade*, which is staunchly conservative—although its conservatism is that of disappointed Social-Democrats—these are all, more or less, moderately to the Left. In comparison with the quality papers (*NRC-Handelsblad* at about 180,000 circulation, and *De Volkskrant* at about 260,000), and the progressive weeklies—*Vrij Nederland* (about 100,000), *Haagse Post* (about 30,000), and *De Groene* (about 13,000)—their readership is very small indeed. The two biggest (*Maatstaf* and *De Gids*) have a circulation of approximately 3,000 subscribers.

CERTAINLY, DURING THE 1980s, the intellectual mood of the country has switched from what had been a hegemony of the Left to growing doubts. It is perhaps a telling comment on Dutch society that no ideological alternative to that dominance has been proposed. Nor is one likely to emerge.

In the Emporium

In the emporium a man is always sitting
waiting for his wife
to come out of the eternal changing-rooms.

Greyly he sits, brushed by cobwebs
of lace, swirled at by chiffon.
The satin legs of the assistant
scissor past his face.

He takes his rod to a quiet, riparian
stretch. There is nothing in the world
but a point of light.
When it moves, everything will break up
and his creature will come to him,
sinuous in the spindrift—
glinting in all colours of the rainbow—
electric under his hand,
beating at his slippery wrists.

His breath comes short:
his fingers itch to pick the wicked barb
from the pink mouth; but on the bank
a matronly figure materialises
revolving slowly, stiff with taffeta.

Connie Bensley

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LETTERS

More News from "Greeneland"

I'D LIKE TO OFFER yet another footnote to the "Greeneland" file; it can be found in *The Times*'s correspondence columns of early 1971. The subject was Viet Nam; and the exchange began following an article by Bernard Levin ("Washing a Thousand Brains", 9 February). In it he described what he called a political Doppler effect on discussion of the war, noting the habit of BBC radio and television to give most prominence to pro-Communist and anti-American commentators. This habit has not died out, but spread to Independent Television News (ITN), the subject these days being Central America, or SDI, or Arms Negotiations. Levin noted that his Doppler effect warped comment on the then current invasion of "neutral" Laos to find and attack North Vietnamese troops stationed there. Such comment, Levin said, held:

> ". . . that it is a mark of irredeemable wickedness for the Americans and South Vietnamese to do things which, when done by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, are a sign of virtue and uprightness."

A few days later General Lord Bourne wrote to *The Times*, supporting what Levin had said:

> ". . . I have visited South Viet Nam and confirm the great efforts of a country which has suffered under Communism once, and is determined not to do so again."

This provoked a supercilious reply from Graham Greene on 12 February:

> ". . . South Viet Nam has suffered under the Japanese and the French, it has suffered under President Diem and his successors. It has suffered under the Americans, but when has it 'once' suffered under communism?"

I was astonished that the author of *The Ugly American* had forgotten all about Uncle Ho's original Viet Minh, but supported my own answer with a more recent instance:

> "During the famous Tet offensive Hue was occupied by the communists. Some 3,000 people were butchered there at that time—under the communists.
>
> Perhaps that example, which might be enlarged on, will serve Mr Greene's stated taste for precision."

Greene seemed upset that I shared (as he said) Lord Bourne's lack of precision. On 27 February he riposted:

> ". . . Of course areas of South Viet Nam like Hue have suffered from communist offensives in a civil war which, unlike the Spanish War, has been supported on one side only by foreign troops. No one will dispute that, and probably unlike Mr Herb Greer I have been caught up myself in such an offensive. Incidentally why do supporters of the Pentagon always write of men, women and children being 'butchered' in a communist offensive, and yet the poor victims of an American offensive become merely 'casualties'? . . ."

By now I had forgotten about *Proverbs* 26:4, with its fools and follies. Should I correct his odd comparison with Spain? Should I adduce my own experience as a journalist in combat? Or explain about "butchering", i.e. tying the hands behind the back with wire, and then placing a bullet in the back of the head?

Finally I decided on a shorter reply, which ended the correspondence and so gave me the last word:

> ". . . Mr Greene's label 'suffered from communist offensives' applied to victims of cold-blooded political mass murder is a masterpiece of imprecision, eclipsing anything printed from General Lord Bourne or myself. . . ."

HERB GREER

Manchester

Throwing money at the Problem

JEFFREY RICHARDS in "Yobbery with Violence" (ENCOUNTER, February 1987) paints an appalling picture of some of the products of "a disastrous decline in the education system . . . which has left Britain one of the most poorly educated countries in Western Europe".

He is right about the decline, and right about the results. But his response to this challenge is ill-informed, ill-considered, and the reverse of radical. For he seems to think that the main if not the only trouble is too little money—an insufficient resource input. Thus, after saying he does not, he does blame "current governmental policy, identified as it is with . . . educational impoverishment and social divisiveness".

WHATEVER the public may or may not believe, and despite actual and damaging cuts where cuts should not have been made, the truth is that, consequent upon declines in the sizes of the relevant age-groups, expenditure per-pupil-head in the state schools has continued to increase. What is not widely known, but what is crucial if we are to find ways to improve, is that there are huge differences both as between authorities and as between individual schools within the same authority.

For instance: the Inner London Education Authority, which spends about 40% more than the national average, gets on average, and despite some excellent individual schools, among the worst examination results. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, reporting on ILEA, themselves insisted that an improvement "certainly does not call for extra resources".

The problems here are not to be solved simply by pouring in still more resources. We must instead break up the Local Education monopolies and somehow subject all individual schools —like the all too few existing independent schools—to the disciplines of the market. Where there is a market and competition you do not find these huge differences in the value for money offered by different suppliers—or not for long.

ANTONY FLEW

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Ohio

An Innocent Abroad

John Ardagh's "East Germany"—By JOHN D. HALLIDAY

SOME ARE BORN NAIVE, some achieve naivety, and some have naivety thrust upon them. The very title of John Ardagh's two rambling articles relating his impressions of the misleadingly named German Democratic Republic ("Life in the Other Germany", ENCOUNTER, March and April 1987) already gives some indication of their inadequacies.

Is Mr Ardagh not aware that the choice of particular words can imply a political and/or ideological statement? The phrase "The Other Germany" implies that there are two Germanies. This view would find approval in East Berlin but would arouse opposition in Bonn, whose government holds the view that there is but one Germany. Does Mr Ardagh therefore support the Socialist Unity Party's (*SED*) interpretation of the German national question? One assumes not—in which case his failure to perceive the problem casts grave doubts on the thoroughness of his preparation, his sensitivity and political in-

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telligence, doubts that are more than confirmed as one reads through his text. Indeed, towards the end of the second article he actually refers to the West German Ministry for Internal German Relations, and yet persists in referring to "inter-German relations". Why?

Quite apart from Ardagh's frequently unfortunate turn of phrase—he writes, for example, that the East Germans have coped more "sensibly" than the Poles or Russians with an imposed centralised economy—his articles raise the question as to whether it is possible to describe the structural machinery of Communist dictatorships using the political terminology of the Western democracies. Can one really apply concepts such as "government", "Cabinet" or "welfare state" with any accuracy to the situation in the *DDR*?

THE MOST DISTURBING THINGS about Mr Ardagh as revealed in these two articles, however, are his naivety and superficiality of judgment. They are a prime example of what happens when a well-intentioned, caring, Anglo-Saxon liberal with the remnants of a 1960s conscience is taken for a walk in a Communist state. The second paragraph of the first article begins:

> "I was not nearly as free as in the West to travel and to meet people."

That he states the obvious suggests he is surprised by this. He continues:

> "I applied to the GDR Embassy in London and was told that they did not at all like the idea of a book about both German States [*sic*!] within one cover, as this was contrary to their basic policy. Could I not write two separate books? I explained that in publishing terms this was impossible."

What? Would Mr Ardagh have acceded to this scandalous, but typical attempt by a Communist régime to interfere with a Westerner's freedom of expression if it had been possible "in publishing terms"? And why was he so naive as to inform them in detail of his reasons for wishing to visit the place? Mr Ardagh is no doubt an honourable man and refused to go along with their demands, but in the text he does not manage to allay fears that his reporting may have been subject to certain conditions. He goes on:

> "Finally my wife and I were granted permission to visit the GDR, under supervision. We were allotted a pleasant and helpful young guide, who showed us around and was present at interviews. But we also had time free to meet a large number of our own private contacts, unescorted, and we found them very ready to talk frankly, both on this visit and on another which we made informally to East Berlin."

With this, Ardagh has successfully pulled the carpet from beneath his own feet, for although in the course of the two articles he refers to numerous conversations with senior officials, rank-and-file Party members, novelists, and "older Communists", as well as ordinary people, on no occasion does he indicate whether or not the "pleasant and helpful guide" was present. Since these people are generally quoted completely uncritically in support of his "argument", the fact that remarks by such people in such circumstances need to be taken with a whole mine of salt completely invalidates the whole exercise.

Was Mr Ardagh not aware that the "pleasant and helpful guide" would be reporting back the names of those he met and what passed between them, and that his conversation partners would know this and judge their responses accordingly? Even if one does have the opportunity to talk to Party members in private, it must be remembered that this is illegal for them. The chances are, therefore, that, despite their apparent chumminess, they too are reporting their conversations. Can Mr Ardagh really be so sure that his private meetings were not under surveillance? I suspect he would be unpleasantly surprised.

THIS PROFOUND NAIVETY is combined with a journalistic desire to speculate without being in full control of the facts. Weimar, he claims, "remains much as it probably was before the War". How does he know? Did he ask the people of Weimar what they think? Similarly, Honecker was "no doubt . . . filled with an old man's nostalgic desire. . . ." Again, how does he know? This combination of naivety and speculation produces *kitsch* (". . . we found cosy little privately-run cafés and tea-rooms whispering the last enchantments of some pre-War Central European *Gemütlichkeit* and frequented by gentle-looking student couples and civilised elderly music-lovers"—did Mr Ardagh really ask them about their age, level of civilisation, and musical tastes?) and crass tastelessness (the red flags and Communist slogans "at least add a cheerful dash of colour to a town otherwise grey and drab"). Cheerful? The red flag is supposed to symbolise revolutionary blood, and for East Germans embodies 40 years of Communist dictatorship. Would Mr Ardagh go so far as to describe the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* as "at least" a jolly marching song?

Despite the large amount of information he has assembled on the various aspects of life in the DDR Mr Ardagh has failed to comprehend Eastern European sensibilities and grasp the deeper significance that links the often apparently contradictory surface phenomena. His conclusions are, therefore, in almost every case banal or misleading. He defends the agricultural policy as "a good example of the way the régime tries to balance the requirements of socialism and of individual privacy"—without having talked to farmers about it, and using words that could have been lifted straight out of a propaganda leaflet. Similarly, he falls for the old chestnut that the state has at least partly fulfilled its "ideal of creating an effective and generous welfare state". Lack of space prevents a detailed analysis here, but this is really one of the most persistent of the myths perpetrated by the East Berlin propaganda machine. The East German state, like the others in the Warsaw Pact, is fundamentally cynical. The social and housing policies it operates are designed to keep the vast majority just enough above poverty to prevent revolution and yet close enough to it to keep it in a state of complete dependence. Such policies have little to do with "welfare" in our sense of the word.

IT IS IN HIS PICTURE of the education system that Mr Ardagh reveals his foolishness most spectacularly, however:

> "One of the more attractive features of the GDR school system is that it provides plenty of scope for hobbies, crafts, sport, culture, debating and other extra-class activities—in this respect it is closer to the British than to the West German model."

One swallows hard at this. Again, it reads like a propaganda leaflet; and, true enough, it transpires that Ardagh's sole experience of DDR schooling (that he relates) is a visit ("I was taken") to a "model comprehensive that I found neat, airy and spacious, comparing well with similar schools in the West. The atmosphere seemed humane and caring, not too regimented. . . ."

And yet: "Some senior pupils in their *FDJ* uniforms were presented for me to interview. One very bright fifteen-year-old daughter of a policeman declared proudly that her aim in life was 'to identify with the State and serve its interests', and she planned to study law: when I asked her what she thought of the Western multi-party system with its alternating governments, she seemed not to understand what I meant."

So much for the British-style debating skills and the brightness of the girl, and yet all Ardagh concludes from this is:

> "Clearly [*sic*!], the *FDJ* and the Pioneers do provide an outlet for the idealism and sense of social service of many young people."

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This is not just naive, it is plain stupid. His account of the model school is reminiscent of the accounts of those captive minds who visited the Soviet Union in the 1920s and Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and suggests he has an honorary doctorate from the Canon Paul Oestreicher School of Political Analysis, whose coat-of-arms depicts a telescope raised to a blind eye.

The fatuousness continues *ad nauseam*. The *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, the Party youth movement, is "rather like Scouts and Guides but more political" (I can't say that I remember being refused permission to take A-levels and go to university after I left the Scouts), ". . . surveillance by the secret police has lightened . . . a citizen can expect to be treated fairly by the law . . .", etc., etc.

To conclude, it is enlightening to focus on Ardagh's perception of the Wall, that scandalous scar that preserves barbarity in Europe. Although he manages to describe the logistics of it with accuracy, he still has the insensitivity to write:

> "But after a second or third visit it begins to seem quite normal."

One is led to question the sincerity of Ardagh's alleged Europeanism. Did he not speculate what an East German might feel about such a remark? The superficiality and, alas, egocentricity that is unwittingly exposed in such comments is then borne out by an episode Ardagh relates immediately afterwards. He wishes to stay an extra night in East Berlin with his West German wife, but this is only possible if she returns to West Berlin first:

> "So I drove her to the Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof and then waited for what seemed like a Kafkaesque eternity, suddenly loathing this police state with all my guts. . . ."

And about time too! But it is indicative that it is only when he is himself affected by the system that he is able to reach this admirable conclusion. As long as he remained the cosseted observer he lacked both the imagination and the courage to identify the GDR for what it is.

John Ardagh's overall assessment does appear to be negative, but in his conclusion he still has the brass neck to claim that "life has in many ways become more livable in the GDR over the past twenty years". But is he the one to judge? If he himself can be reduced to loathing after a single minor instance of bureaucratic harassment, how can he feel in the position of being able to decide that the lives of those who have to endure much worse harassment much more frequently have become more "liveable"? At one point Mr Ardagh writes:

> "Even educated people will often seem oddly naive, unable to make comparisons; and whenever I met someone who was fortunate enough to have travelled to the West, his sophistication and liveliness of mind came usually as a striking contrast."

Er, yes. . . . Before he ventures across the Elbe again, I would advise Mr Ardagh to take the cushion out of his armchair and read some Marx and Lenin.

J. D. HALLIDAY

Edinburgh

Dworkin & Scruton

"DWORKIN'S EMPIRE" (ENCOUNTER, July-August 1987), captioning Roger Scruton's book review of *Law's Empire* by Ronald Dworkin, warrants a brief rejoinder.

Does Professor Dworkin posit a theory of law? Yes. However, it might be characterised more accurately as a theory of predilection.

One of Dworkin's reigning concepts is that the *leitmotif* of law ought to be both the advancement and enhancement of the rights of the individual. Whereas this notion does not reflect a self-evident truth, therefore it must be viewed as cut wholly from the cloth of values—no more or less. But Professor Scruton is equally biased and unconvincing.

There is no inconsistency between Dworkin's combative support for affirmative action (labelled by Scruton "reverse discrimination") and his mounting a defence of legal tradition. Indeed, many jurists sanctify legal tradition in the US while acknowledging the social value of affirmative action.

Law reflects social values respecting intended and expected rules of behaviour. It is mistaken to aver that the aim of law is to promote justice. Justice is conformity *to the law*; and this implies that law is a distinct reality. In addition, when justice is erroneously equated with law, the intended denotation is that there is a quest for *fairness*.

Finally, whether the intellectual exercise is designated jurisprudence or political science, the objective of the law is to maintain a proper and necessary balance between individual right and community need as well as harmonising liberty and equality.

ELLIOTT A. COHEN

New York City

On Murderous Invective

MAY A LAY READER offer a modest formulation or two to help smother the tiresome Watson-Joffe dispute? (I leave Ernst Nolte off-stage.)

Any (pre-"Green") German ideology involved mass-murder—whether Marx-Engelsism, Wilhelmine Prussianism, or Nazism. The essence of such programmes was the physical removal of a defined class of opponents, through war (external or civil) and, victory gained, administrative liquidation.

Hitler's political genius lay in his simultaneous targeting of no less than three classes of exterminees: Jews, Communists, and German "reactionaries". Jews were given two subclassifications: "*Bolshevistisches Judentum*" and "International Finance", assigning them alternative impurities. Communists represented the rival (non-German) current ideology. The third target, the Aryan German aristocracy (in decline) and the still prestigious middle class, remained obscured until July 1944. Hitler managed to pose to these conservatives for a decade as a stabilising nationalist.

Dr George Watson ("Letters", ENCOUNTER, September-October 1987) is, I suggest, correct in stressing Hitler's revolutionary kinship with Stalin as a "brown Bolshevik". Dr Josef Joffe ("The Battle of the Historians", ENCOUNTER, May 1987, and "Letters", September-October 1987) is equally entitled to speak of "Hitler's war of extermination against the Jews [as] a specific and autonomous event". Hitler's personal hatred of Jews fuelled his most personal ultra-dynamic movement: the most destructive in modern European history.

Ideology is neither thought nor morality: it is simply murderous invective.

As for the West's acceptance of Gorbachovism, this should, surely, depend on the abatement and final disappearance of Marxist/Leninist propaganda from Moscow.

CHARLES JANSON

London

Professors

I HAVE LIVED through several decades and find it increasingly difficult to persuade myself that this is a real world and not one invented by Peter Simple or his forerunners Beachcomber and Timothy Shy. Normally ENCOUNTER helps, but here ("Of Lords, Sirs & Plain Misters", June 1987) is Irving Kristol of all people described as a Professor of Social Thought! What in God's name is that?

TONY MILNE
(Humpty Dumpty Professor of Scholastic Claptrap)

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Life & Letters Today

London

KEEP OUT! **Later this year the assembled Octopus book companies, including Heinemann's and Secker and Warburg's, move into the old Michelin building on the Fulham Road, currently undergoing a massive refurbishment. Staff were dismayed last week to be told that a number of new rules will apply when they move.**

The most alarming of these concerns authors. Publishers have never had much time for authors; but in the new Octopus headquarters employees have been instructed not to allow them anywhere near the "management work stations"—desks to you and me. The new thinking apparently is that authors are not essential to the publishing process and should be kept as far away from the place as possible. They'll just be set upon by swarms of killer publicists as soon as they're in the front door.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

Bristol

END OF EMPIRE: *National Heritage has withdrawn plans to set up a Museum of the British Empire in Bristol because the Labour-controlled city council wanted the title "British Commonwealth".*

THE TIMES

London

ORWELLIAN CHANGE: **A once derelict canal-side backwater, made famous by George Orwell in "The Road to Wigan Pier", has won a travel prize.**

The British Tourist Authority awarded its annual "Come to Britain" Trophy to Wigan Pier, a complex of restored buildings beside the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in Wigan, 195 miles (313 kilometres) north of London.

The pier is a wharf on the canal, one of many cut in the 18th century to link Lancashire towns for the transport of goods. Orwell's 1937 book, describing the dreariness of working-class life, made Wigan Pier synonymous with stagnation and decay.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

MOROCCO BOUND: *A reader who went into a bookshop in Preston and asked for F. A. Hayek's* **"The Road to Serfdom"** *was told by the assistant: "If we've got it, you'll find it in the Travel section."*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Damascus

OUT OF CHARM'S WAY: **Syria shows a stern face to the outside world, with its domestic system of rigid control, its Soviet-supplied military and its foreign policy of rejecting any peace plan for the Middle East that excludes Damascus.**

On closer examination, however, a softer side can be seen.

Foreigners mingle freely. In Damascus, almost any occasion merits a party.

When a prominent Syrian recently published her first novel, in French, two dozen Ambassadors and members of the best Damascene families turned up for a book-signing. They politely applauded as Najad Khaddam, the wife of Syria's Vice President, untied the crepe-paper ribbons in the colours of both the Syrian and French flags. Wearing fashionable black velvet and mink, and rhinestone-studded fashion pumps, Mrs Khaddam chatted easily with guests as the champagne flowed.

"What never ceases to amaze me is how normal it all seems here", said one Ambassador as he reached for an apricot-and-pistachio sweet wrapped in gold foil. "It's such a charming place, not at all like the military camp I expected."

NEW YORK TIMES

London

NOMENCLATURE: *An American professor once wrote to remonstrate with me [Francis King writes] for having described the colour of a carpet as "nigger-brown" in one of my early novels. The same fastidiousness has presumably caused Agatha Christie's 1943 "Ten Little Niggers" to resurface as "And Then There Were None" at the Duke of York's Theatre. So far from being even "Indians", the "niggers" are now "travellers". No doubt they will eventually become "sales representatives".*

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Westminster

OLD HAT: **The enforced resignation of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Havers, last week came after an unprecedented campaign by a small but powerful, group of peers. The sniping campaign by a vocal minority is almost unheard of in the gentlemen's club atmosphere of the Lords.**

His detractors in the Lords continued to deride Lord Havers for minor lapses of protocol including wearing his tricorne hat the wrong way around.

MAIL ON SUNDAY

West Sussex

DESIGNER ANTIQUES: *A piece of Horsham's architectural history was uncovered recently when a newsagent decided he wanted more room to display magazines. Richard Langridge, owner of Langridge's Newsagent at the corner of East Street removed the hardboard on the walls.*

What surfaced were beams, a door head and the remains of another, dating from between 1425 and 1450.

One customer who came in while we talked, remarked "Oh, I like the new design, aren't those beams fascinating?"

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY TIMES

London

KAFKAESQUE: **British publishers may be inefficient, but they are never quite so daft as the Americans. The royalties department of Random House in New York has just written to an author care of Secker & Warburg in London. It read:**

"Dear Author, our records indicate we are missing your social security number or taxpayer identification number.

In order to avoid penalties imposed by the Internal Revenue Service it is necessary you complete the taxpayer identification number and return it to this office in the self-addressed envelope."

The author would have appreciated this eerie bureaucratic malfunction. His name was Franz Kafka.

SUNDAY TIMES

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"**Magisterial**....Whilst there are scholars possessed of such extraordinary analytic power there is hope for the rest of us."
–**Daniel Patrick Moynihan**

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

THE TRULY DISADVANTAGED

The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy

Expanding his provocative theory of the black underclass developed in *The Declining Significance of Race*, Wilson challenges the orthodoxies of both liberal and conservative approaches to inner-city problems.

"A pathbreaking book, critically important to our current public and political debate as well as to social theory."
–**Michael Harrington**

"Should spur critical rethinking in every quarter about the causes and potential remedies for inner-city poverty."
–**Robert Greenstein,** *New York Times Book Review*

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